

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

Catholic Meeting of Dublin,

&c. &c.



PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

Catholic Meeting of Dublin,

&c. &c.

THE OCEANIC

AT THE

CHURCH OF THE

AT THE

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

Catholic Meeting of Dublin,

DULY CONVENED

On Wednesday, October 31, 1792, at the Exhibition-Room,
Exchequer-Street.

WITH THE

LETTER OF THE CORPORATION OF DUBLIN,
TO THE PROTESTANTS OF IRELAND.

ANNEXED IS THE

DECLARATION

Adopted by the General Committee, March the 17th, 1792;

AND

SUBSCRIBED BY THE CATHOLICS OF IRELAND.

ALSO THE

LETTER AND PLAN OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE
FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF DELEGATES.

In *reason*, all *government* without the consent of the *governed*, is the very *definition of slavery*: but in fact, “eleven men well armed, will certainly subdue one single man in his shirt.” But I have done: for those who have used *power* to cramp *liberty*, have gone so far as to resent even the *liberty of complaining*; although a man upon the rack was never known to be refused the liberty of *roaring* as loud as he thought fit.

SWIFT—DRAPIER’S 4th LETTER.

D U B L I N :

PRINTED BY H. FITZPATRICK, 2, UPPER ORMOND-QUAY.

1792.



CH A

HIT 013A

157

PROCEEDINGS

AT THE

Catholic Meeting of Dublin,

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 31, 1792.

A very numerous meeting of the CATHOLICS of Dublin, having in consequence of public notice, taken place at the EXHIBITION-ROOM in Exchequer-street, and

Mr. THOMAS BRAUGHALL

having been called to the Chair, the business was opened nearly as follows, by

Mr. CHARLES RYAN:

SIR, as Chairman to the meeting of Parochial Delegates of this city, it becomes my duty to state to this assembly their motives for calling you together. You have all seen the various Resolutions from the Counties and Grand Juries of Ireland, against the views of the Catholics, and you have seen those Resolutions ably replied to by the Catholics of every part of the kingdom. The Manifesto of the Corporation of this city remains, as yet, unanswered, and your Parochial Delegates conceived that, in imitation of the wise proceedings of your brethren elsewhere, you are called upon to vindicate yourselves from the false charges and false principles contained in the Address of this city; I therefore move that this Address be now read.

Which was read accordingly, and is as follows:

B

ADDRESS

ADDRESS OF THE CORPORATION OF DUBLIN.

CITY OF DUBLIN.

At a POST-ASSEMBLY of the Right Honourable the *Lord Mayor, Sheriffs, Commons, and Citizens* of the CITY of DUBLIN, held at the *Exhibition-House in William-street*, on Tuesday the 11th Day of September, 1792, pursuant to a Requisition, for the purpose of taking into consideration a *Letter*, circulated throughout this city and kingdom, signed “EDWARD BYRNE:”

A copy of said Letter, and also of the Plan and Observations mentioned to have been inclosed therein, having been read from a *Public Print*, the Assembly UNANIMOUSLY came to the following determination:

RESOLVED,

THAT a LETTER be addressed to the PROTESTANTS OF IRELAND, to the following effect:

“COUNTRYMEN AND FRIENDS!

“THE firm and manly support which we received from you when we stood forward in defence of the PROTESTANT ASCENDANCY, deserves our warmest thanks; we hoped that the sense of the Protestants of Ireland, declared upon that occasion, would have convinced our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects, that the pursuit of political power was for them a vain pursuit; for though the liberal and enlightened mind of the Protestant receives pleasure in seeing the Catholic exercise his religion with freedom—enjoy his property in security—and possess the highest degree of personal liberty, yet experience has taught us that, without the ruin of the Protestant establishment, the Catholic cannot be allowed the smallest influence in the state.

“For

“ For more than ten years the press has teemed with various writings, intended to prove that Roman Catholics have an equal claim with Protestants to a participation in the exercise of political power in this kingdom ; that such a participation would not be injurious to Protestants ; that prejudice, only, prevents Protestants from conceding this claim ; and to complete the work, a Letter has lately appeared, signed “ *Edward Byrne*,” in which the Roman Catholics are instructed to proceed upon the plan of the French democracy, to elect a representation of their own ; to which said Byrne insinuates that “ the Protestants *must* bend, as he has assurance from the highest authority.”

“ In answer to these charges, and these claims, we shall in a few lines briefly state the case of the Protestants and Roman Catholics of Ireland ; in doing which we shall not endeavour to add to our language any other ornament than the beautiful simplicity of truth.

“ One hundred years are just elapsed since the question was tried, upon an appeal to Heaven—whether this country should become a Popish kingdom, governed by an arbitrary and unconstitutional Popish Tyrant, and dependant upon—France ; or enjoy the blessings of a free Protestant government—a Protestant monarchy, limited by the constitution, and an intimate connection with the free empire of Britain. The Great Ruler of all things decided in favour of our ancestors ; he gave them victory, and Ireland became a Protestant nation, enjoying a British Constitution.

“ But the conflict had been neither short nor trivial ; and so many and so great were the efforts made by the Roman Catholics in support of their Popish king and French connections, that our ancestors were obliged in their own defence, to deprive them of all political power, which they did by severe but necessary restrictive laws.

“ Time draws the veil of oblivion over the virtues as well as the faults of men : in the lapse of more than fourscore years, the causes which induced the necessity of these laws were almost forgotten ; while the generous Protestant saw with pain his Roman Catholic fellow-subject labouring under restrictions which, from his peaceable demeanour then, appeared no longer necessary ; and he could scarcely refrain
from

from charging his ancestors with too much severity. Session after session the restrictive laws were rapidly repealed, and the last session of parliament left the Roman Catholics in no wise different from their Protestant fellow-subjects—*save only in the exercise of political power.*

“ But be it remembered, that from the moment the Protestant began to make concessions, the Roman Catholic began to extend his claims ; at first a very little would have satisfied him—that little and much more was granted ; more still was claimed ; and when every thing consistent with Protestant safety was conceded, instead of grateful acknowledgments and declarations of satisfaction, our ears have been dinned with exclamations of discontent, the ravings of political clubs, and the declamations of state reformers.

“ But we hope that the great body of the Roman Catholics are yet free from the influence of that dangerous spirit which has pervaded the clubs in this city : we hope they will reject Mr. BYRNE's counsel, and be grateful for the indulgences they have received from Protestants. To delude them from their tranquility, they are told by Byrne, that he has “ the first authority for asserting this application “ will have infinite weight with our gracious sovereign, “ and with parliament, if our friends are qualified to declare that it is the universal wish of every Catholic in the “ nation.”—But we trust it is unfounded ; were it otherwise, we tell them that the Protestants of Ireland would not be compelled by any authority whatever to abandon that political situation which their forefathers won with their swords, and which is therefore their birth-right ; or to surrender their religion at the footstool of Popery.

“ Every Irish Protestant has an interest in the government of this kingdom ; he is born a member of the state, and with a capacity of filling its offices ;—this capacity he derives from that Constitution, which his ancestors acquired when they overthrew the Popish tyrant—it is guaranteed by that Constitution—it is secured by the law—he is in possession of it, and we know of no power under Heaven, authorised to alienate this, our most valuable inheritance.

“ Having

“ Having thus, countrymen, and friends, spoken to you our sentiments in the undisguised language of truth, we shall intreat you to join with us in using every honest means of persuading the Roman Catholics to rest content with

The most perfect Toleration of their Religion,
The fullest Security of their Property—and
The most compleat Personal Liberty—

but by no means now, or hereafter, to attempt any interference in the government of the kingdom, as such interference would be incompatible with the Protestant Ascendancy, which we have resolved *with our Lives and Fortunes to maintain.*

“ And, that no doubt may remain of what we understand by the words “ Protestant Ascendancy,” we have further

“ RESOLVED, That we consider the Protestant Ascendancy to consist in

A PROTESTANT KING OF IRELAND,
A PROTESTANT PARLIAMENT,
A PROTESTANT HIERARCHY,
PROTESTANT ELECTORS AND GOVERNMENT,
THE BENCHES OF JUSTICE,
THE ARMY AND THE REVENUE,
Through all their Branches and Details,
PROTESTANT ;
And this System supported by a Connection with the
PROTESTANT REALM OF BRITAIN.”

RESOLVED,

That the foregoing LETTER be published in the Dublin Journal; and that copies thereof be transmitted to all the Corporations, Magistrates, and Members of both Houses of Parliament, in this Kingdom.

ALLEN and GREEN,
Town Clerks.

After

After which Mr. RYAN observed, that previous to the last session of Parliament, the Catholic Committee had been instructed by their brethren throughout the nation, to petition Parliament, in their name, for the Elective Suffrage, and an equal participation of the Trial by Jury.—That in compliance with these instructions the Committee had prepared an humble and respectful petition, which, after being presented to the House of Commons, was rejected with unusual indecorum; several members asserting that it did not contain the sentiments of the Catholics at large, but merely those of a few factious people in the metropolis. He stated, that to remove every objection on this ground hereafter, the Committee prepared the circular letter, to which Mr. Byrne's name was affixed; the object of which was to obtain the unequivocal sense of the Catholic body, through their delegates, that the same may be laid at the feet of our Sovereign and of Parliament the next session, for a redress of grievances. He observed, that the plan proposed for effecting this object had not for imitation the French Assembly.—That if those who charged us with such imitation had been acquainted with the English classics, they would have seen it in Hume's "*Essay on a perfect Commonwealth.*" That by adopting this plan the Committee attended even to the prejudices of their Protestant brethren, which might have been alarmed had the Catholics assembled in large bodies to elect their delegates throughout the kingdom.—That this circular letter further evinced the wisdom of the Committee, as by its plan the Protestant mind was not to be called to an inquiry into the merits of the Catholic question, until the petition should be presented to Parliament; and thereby they hoped to avoid those heats and inflammations which controversy usually excites. That had this plan been suffered to take place, the nation would have remained in perfect tranquility, and not have been, as it now is, distracted at home and disgraced abroad, like an unsettled and uncivilized country. That this silent, respectful, and guarded proceeding was dragged into public; and that publications the most inflammatory, seditious, unconstitutional and false, were issued from Grand Jury Rooms, Corporations, and County Meetings; publications that dared to deny the competence of, and threaten resistance

to.

to legislative wisdom and justice, if the relief sought for by the Catholics should be granted; proceedings which evinced that they, not us, would presume to overawe the Legislature.

But, by a peculiar ordinance of the Almighty, it so happens in life, that the means pursued to accomplish wicked and unjust views, generally defeat the intention. It has so happened in the present instance. Our cause is found:—it requires but a fair hearing, and a fair statement, to gain its point.—What we would not dare to do, our enemies have accomplished: they have laid our case before the tribunal of the nation. That love of truth and justice, which God has implanted in every heart, pleads for us with the Protestant mind of this country; and every publication against us has proved a successful missionary, converting numbers to our cause.

It is stated, he observed, that restoring us to the right of suffrage would, "*as experience has proved, effect the ruin of the Protestant Establishment.*" History shews the fact to have been otherwise;—for it tells us, that the Irish Catholics enjoyed that right, with safety to the Protestant Establishment, until the beginning of the last reign; and if when their numbers, property, prejudices, and foreign views and allies were great, they exercised this right, without injury to the Protestant Establishment, (for liberty, like the element we live in, suffers no diminution by the universality of its use) what possible danger to it could now occur, when their prejudices are gone; their foreign hopes and allies at an end, their *real* property, which chiefly gives parliamentary influence, as nothing; and their proportion of numbers to the Protestants greatly diminished? But to prove that it is not from numbers, but from *real* property that parliamentary influence arises, attend to county elections, in which you will uniformly find, that it is a few individuals of great landed property who make the returns. It follows from hence, that as the Catholics are not, to the Protestants, as one to a hundred, in point of real property, their influence in elections must, for a long period, be very inconsiderable.—Besides, must they not return Protestants? And could the trivial influence they would thus have over the representatives

tatives for counties, (for such alone I conceive to be their views) operate against near five times the number of the representatives for cities and boroughs, against the whole House of Peers, a Protestant Privy Council, and a Protestant King, and his extensive influence, connected with the Protestant nation of Britain? If security be required, its accomplishment arises from a government of love, not from a government of hatred or fear; and, however men may cloak their sentiments, it is not in nature to be attached to a state where they feel themselves wantonly aggrieved.

It is objected, that they “*know of no power under Heaven authorised to alienate this their most valuable inheritance.*” No man could be so unreasonable as to expect this, or even that they would abridge it.—Would it abridge, or take away their inheritance, that we sat together on Grand Juries—or voted together for Members of Parliament? No—The only effect it would have on it would be—that of breaking a monopoly, or wounding the pride of a narrow-minded man, whose feelings may be hurt at seeing his depressed fellow-citizen arise to his own level. And will any person acquainted with the principles of government vindicate the opposition we experience on this ground? When we get power, it is said, that we will confederate for the overthrow of Protestants.—Has this happened in Germany or Switzerland, where Protestants and Catholics have equal rights?—Will not the long trial in these places, or the shorter trial in America and France, vindicate us from such an apprehension? It is inequality of privileges which throws men into parties, and creates enmity and discontent, from which alone Protestant danger in Ireland is to be apprehended.—Remove then this inequality, and the danger ceases; because you give the Catholics an equal interest with the Protestants in protecting their common rights.—Thus, by their having a natural, and an interested ally, Protestant strength and security are increased;—an important advantage obtained, without relinquishing or lessening any privilege they now possess.

History records no instance of a people arising into insurrection, or disturbing public tranquility, where they received a proper return for untainted loyalty: yet the
Catholics

Catholics of Ireland, who have abjured and done away every tenet incompatible with the most perfect security to our Protestant Establishment, by the oath of allegiance they have taken, and the declaration they have subscribed; and whose conduct has uniformly proved the purity of their principles, labour under a catalogue of disabilities, unjust in their operation, and disgraceful to our jurisprudence.—I will not quote an author whose principles may be disallowed as impracticable or abstract, but I will cite those whose orthodoxy is universally admitted, and they are *Locke*, *Montesquieu*, *Blackstone*, and *Paylie*.—We are told by these writers, that to inflict a civil punishment without a civil crime, on any sect of people, is religious persecution. In this predicament stands the Irish Catholic; and our nation, of consequence, exhibits to Europe, at the close of the eighteenth century, a country persecuting, on the score of religion, the majority of its inhabitants.

We are charged with ingratitude, in not feeling, as we should, the goodness of the Legislature for the favours it has conferred on us. We are not destitute of the virtue of gratitude; the favours lately conferred were very ungraciously given, and are inadequate to our wants; they could only operate on the few; the *MASS* can never partake of their advantages; but the elective suffrage would raise our *miserable peasantry* from their present *wretchedness*, into comfort and station; it would secure to them protection, and the blessing of a *tenant's right*; the want of which they daily feel, and which is the proximate cause of all their *misery*; it would give *security* to the upper ranks for their *civil* rights, which are *precarious* without it; and it would give them that rank and consequence which should ever be attached to property.

If we are discontented, the fault is not ours; it is in human nature. The savage, unacquainted with the comforts and luxuries of civil society, repines not at his hard condition. But the Irish Catholics, who have witnessed at home the Revolution of 1782; who have seen the Revolutions of America and France; who have heard their cause discussed and applauded; who associating, as I trust they always will, like brethren with our Protestant countrymen, and at whose tables they

have daily heard events memorable in the annals of freedom, commemorated in bumpers; they I say, with such information and such stimuli, must be torpid indeed, if they continued insensible to the blessings of liberty, and were not miserable without them. Sir, such is our case; but relying on its justice, on the patriotism of our Protestant brethren, and the goodness of Providence, we are determined to persevere; convinced that we will obtain, through the medium of the Constitution, the inestimable objects of our pursuit.

The words "*Protestant Ascendancy*," like the Cabala, are used as a magic term to keep back the reason, to suppress the justice, and to alarm the fears of our Protestant countrymen. That term was first defined by an honourable member of the House of Commons, a man of learning, and of a family of genius.* The corporation has copied his definition. I would have expected from him a more accurate one: as explained by that honourable gentleman, it comprehends every place of trust and emolument in Ireland to be exclusively Protestant. This is not Protestant Ascendancy merely; this is Protestant MONOPOLY combined with it. Protestant Ascendancy, to which the Catholic would satisfactorily acquiesce, in my opinion, consists in having the King of Ireland, his Privy Council, the House of Peers, the House of Commons, and the Church of Ireland, exclusively Protestant. This is complete *ascendancy*, combined with full *security*. It is for the *monopoly*, then, not for *security* or *ascendancy*, that our enemies have rung the alarm bell. But while so great a part of the body politic is kept in this palsied state, we cannot have vigour at home or respectability abroad.

The genius of discord has presided over this country since the earliest period of our history to the present time. Taking advantage of our of our distractions, we have uniformly been plundered and oppressed with impunity. Hence it is, that we have not yet risen to the rank of a nation, but are still considered a province to Great-Britain by all Europe. The Corporation of this city resolves to become the instrument of Almighty vengeance, in his afflictions of this country; for it declares, that we shall never be restored
to.

* Mr. Sheridan.

to any participation of political liberty. Presumptuous men! whose imbecility alone can equal their arrogance. They may as well attempt to arrest the progress of time as the progress of reason, which now travels with great and rapid strides through Europe, and which will work our emancipation. They have issued their anathema, and cut us off from the pale of political communion. Are we not to be redeemed after more than a Jewish servitude? Yes, we will be redeemed—and the hour is not remote. We require but to persevere, to be temperate, and united, and we shall be free.

Mr. M'DONNEL.

Sir, the eternal proscription of the Catholics from a participation in the Constitution of their country by the corporation of this city;—the severe censures and decrees of many of the Grand Juries and county meetings; and the imputations with which we are so *liberally* charged, must fill the mind of every Catholic with extreme concern. We have not deserved this from our country. We are good and useful subjects in our different classes, as husbandmen, manufacturers, and traders; and in every situation which the laws do not exclude us from. We love our country as well as our Protestant brethren. We are better subjects, I might be allowed to say, than they, because we are as good with less reason to be so; we would hardly become better by the magical assistance of a recantation.

You cannot discern the Catholics in your armies at home; but this was not the case in the ranks of your Volunteers, who obtained the independence of your Legislature. Abroad, the bravery and abilities of Irishmen is next to proverbial, and proved by the military situations they fill. In your navy, or rather the navy of Great-Britain, will it be said that the Catholics are not useful?—In private life no distinctions on account of religion are observed, and the closest ties of friendship are formed between Protestant and Catholic. Why then only in politics do we differ? Even in this the difference would cease, if Catholics and Protestants were left to themselves; but the monopolists of influence and emolument take care, through all the gradations of communication, from the highest to the lowest order of Protestants,

Protestants, industriously to foment distinctions and divisions; and religion has presented itself as the fittest tool with which to accomplish their purpose;—thus are the undiscerning, the bigoted, or prejudiced Protestants duped by their interested brethren, whilst the Catholic is kept in slavery, and his exertions cramped, to the considerable detriment of himself, his family, and his country. If we complain, or form a plan, legal and constitutional, for agreeing on an humble petition to our Sovereign and the Legislature, praying for a redress of our grievances, we are called seditious, factious, and inflammatory. We clearly discern whence the causes of discontent proceed; but we deny the imputations against us. The obstinate retainers of these causes, and their advocates, are chargeable for their effects, not we, the sufferers. If we cannot be put down by reason, it must be done, or attempted, by heaping on us invective and calumny. Language seems scarce strong enough to convey the outcry raised against us. Whether or not, we deserve this, must appear to every discerning and unbiafed person who has been an observer of the contest, and has read the authorized publications on both sides. The Catholics will still pursue their lawful course with temper and with firmness; the aid and good wishes of the liberal, informed, and virtuous Protestants accompany our efforts; and we doubt not every day to obtain an accession to the number of our able advocates among them. Look to our illustrious friends in both Houses of Parliament; to the Protestants of Cork and Wexford; to our patriotic Societies; to the town of Belfast, and Volunteers of Ulster;—to the Grand Juries that would not interfere against us, and to the Grand Jurors who declared in our favour;—converse with the independent and unprejudiced Protestant—the triumph of reason over injustice appears evident. See how small in the opposite scale are the *selected* Grand Jurors and their Foremen brought out against us—the thinly attended county meetings of Protestant freeholders—the corporations of rotten and contemptible boroughs—and the *learned* and *liberal* corporation of the city of Dublin. I can say to the latter, that they need not be afraid of their *sanctuary* being invaded, the object of Catholic ambition.—As a trader of this city,

I shall

I shall say, that it must first become an object of the ambition of *respectable* Protestant and Presbyterian traders, of whom, though I see some in their lists, they are comparatively few indeed.—It must first become a nursery, from which respectable magistrates can be *always* selected; men who would not deign to employ the means now too often successful, to obtain distinction and city honours. 'Till this becomes the case, the corporation need not fear, I say, to be besieged or assailed by the Catholics. We have opportunities enough already to waste our time, and lavish our money. We have examples enough of excess, of intemperance, and improvidence. We have roads enough open to us to bankruptcy and ruin. *Our* cause is the cause of our country. *Our* object is the relief of our oppressed and miserable peasantry, and to raise our body from its present degraded state in our native country.

I shall conclude, Sir, with moving you, "That a Committee consisting of eight persons, be now appointed to prepare an Answer to the Letter from the Corporation of the City of Dublin to the Protestants of Ireland, and to submit the same to this meeting."

Mr. CHAS. RYAN seconded the motion.

Doctor RYAN.

Mr. Chairman, although I lament the occasion which brings us together; yet it is some consolation to me to reflect, that we have not created that occasion by the intemperance of our public declarations, or by any acts of violence or disorder. It gives me some satisfaction to think, that if we are obliged to defend our conduct against the misrepresentations of malevolence, we can do it in a manner most honourable to ourselves and satisfactory to the public; without chicane or evasion, without following the example, and falling into the errors of Grand Juries and Corporations; without calumniating others, and above all things, without disgracing ourselves. I must own that I think it a fortunate circumstance to be accused, when accusation leads to an honourable acquittal, and serves to bring a man out of the ordeal better than he went into it. I
hope

hope the Catholics come out of that ordeal better than they went into it. I know their cause comes out better than it went into it; for it is the mark and peculiar quality of a just and honourable cause, to flourish and to prosper even under the contumely and stripes of those who are not just and honourable; and like the giant Antæus, to acquire vigour even when it is flung upon the ground.

The asperity of language which has been heaped on you so plentifully, the atrocious and extravagant designs with which you have been charged, instead of leaving any stain on your characters, only serve to shew the false perceptions, the erroneous judgment, and above all, the real weakness of your enemies; for be assured, Gentlemen, that if you had been criminal, you would not have been outraged; you might have been punished; but you would have been punished, not with that insolence which bigotry assumes when it usurps the place of reason, but with that sober dignity—that measured solemnity, which justice in its dispensations never fails to blend with acts of necessary severity.

These reflections sprung up spontaneously in my mind, on seeing a set of Resolutions issued against the proceedings of the General Committee and the Catholic body at large. Sir, I shall not detain you with any tedious comment on these resolutions. It would be happy for our countrymen if they had never seen the day; they are a blot on the national character. What must a foreigner think of Irishmen on seeing such a *farrago* of acrimony and imbecility? He must conclude that Irishmen are fanatics or savages; he must conclude that one part of the natives are little less obdurate than slave-drivers; and, if he be a man of sensibility, he must pity another part of the natives, who are in a state little better than that of negroes;—in a word, he must conclude that Ireland is as yet, in the night of the 12th century, or perhaps but lately recovered from the tyger and the ourang-outang.

I need not call to your recollection, Sir, the cause, or rather the pretext for raising this outcry, like the warhoop of the Indian, from one extremity of the kingdom to the other. You already know that it is the Circular Letter
and

and Plan of the Sub-committee of the Catholics. There are two points to be considered in this plan : first, the object which it proposes to accomplish ; and secondly, the mode of accomplishing that object. The object is to collect the Catholic sentiment extensively and unequivocally, and the mode of doing this (which I need not repeat, as you will find it detailed in the plan) is, of all others, the best. It collects the general sense, without assembling multitudes together ; it avoids, on the one hand, the inconvenience of partial inquiry ; and on the other, the inconvenience of popular tumult. It interrogates the whole Catholic body, and receives an answer, as it were in a whisper. The object of the plan is also justified by the peculiar circumstances in which we stood, as must appear from a review of some occurrences in our history. About a year ago, a number of respectable gentlemen associated together for the purpose of promoting their own emancipation and yours, and published a declaration, containing a statement of the grievances under which they laboured, and the means which they intended to employ for the redress of those grievances.

The appearance of *thought*, in a quarter which was supposed to be over-run with ignorance and apathy, was considered as an alarming omen ; and therefore it was resolved to crush it in its cradle, or to check it in its progress. What was published by one set of Catholics, another set of Catholics were called on to disavow ; and it was hoped, that such disavowal would be made not only without difficulty, but with alacrity. It is unnecessary to remind you, that no disavowal was made. Indeed it was somewhat unreasonable to call upon one set of men to disavow what another set of men had published ; and it was somewhat insulting to the feelings of those men to insist on their declaring, that what was true was false, that what was *heavy* was *light*, that the very nature of things was inverted, and that our calamity was our happiness. But why call it unreasonable or insulting ? It was much more. It was despotism, and despotism of the worst kind ; it was an assumption of power over the feelings and prerogatives of the mind ; it was saying to the wretched Catholic, you must not avail yourself of the decrees of God in favour of the
rest

rest of your species. Your sensations must dispense with their natural and external signs ; you must bear your woes in silence ; they must not be indulged in lamentation ; if you feel pain, you must say, that it is pleasure. Good God, Sir, in what sort of a country do we live, where to qualify men for the appellation of dutiful and peaceable subjects, it is required that they should be hypocrites or mutes ! But most happily for you, this eastern kind of servility was not agreed to ; if it had been agreed to, you would have remained on your backs, as you had been for a century ; and what is more, you would not have deserved the aid of any friendly hand to raise you from your fallen condition.

The Catholics and their cause were however to be put down ; and for this purpose it was thought proper to weaken you by dividing you. This division I shall not dwell on, nor should I have mentioned it at all, were it not to express an hope that it may never again take place, and to shew the advantages which it put into the hands of your enemies. No sooner were you split into parties, than you were laughed at and despised ; and your Committee was called a self-created, self-delegated, and self-authorized set of men, acting and speaking in their own name, and not in the name of the body at large. To defeat, therefore, this triumph of your enemies, and to make division impossible in future, or if not impossible, at least nugatory, was the cause and origin of the plan ; so that however strange the assertion may appear, it may be said to be, in a great measure, the offspring of the slanders and the forgeries of your enemies.

There is one part of the plan which I beg leave to explain, not because it is in itself obscure, but because it has been industriously misrepresented. I mean the terms, " where the trust is revocable at pleasure," which have been made to imply a power in the Committee to expel refractory members. When we say that a trust is revocable, we surely mean that it is revocable by those who gave it, and as the Committee is only the depository of powers, it cannot, without a gross error, be said to have given any. These words therefore, strictly and unequivocally, apply to

to the people who chose delegates, and not to the delegates themselves.

But after all that has been said, it must be evident to every one, that the real ground of objection to the plan is, not what it proposes to be done, but what it proposes to ask—the Elective Franchise; and if you call for proofs, you will find them in what may be called the *Pastoral Letter* of the Corporation of this city.

The members of this Corporation have been *meritoriously* employed; first in reviewing the page of history to tell us, what most certainly we did not know before, the exploits of their ancestors; secondly, in making an appeal to Heaven to continue to them, I suppose, the inspirings of “*the beautiful simplicity of truth*”; and lastly, after the benefit no doubt of a particular revelation, they are transformed into Legislators; dictate to the *hitherto* legitimate powers how far they may go, and where they must stop; chop a little logic, and give us a definition of the *Protestant Ascendancy*.

As to their historical labours, I must own that I cannot commend them; and I must still think that the works of Hume and Robertson will outlive the works of the corporation; but if history is to be resorted to, surely it ought to be resorted to, not with a view to deform it, but to report it fairly; not to deceive others, but to instruct all. He who destroys the land-marks which experience has left us for the regulation of our conduct, is not less criminal than the man who destroys his neighbour's fences, in order to pillage him without opposition. I fear *the beautiful simplicity of truth* did not preside over the historical labours of the corporation; and for the best reason in the world, because truth is not to be found in the Augean stable of bigotry. As to an “appeal to Heaven,” it is at all times a serious undertaking, and whenever made, it must fill the mind with reverence and awe: that the honest man should pour out his prayers to Heaven and be heard, is what we are to expect from the justice and mercy of our Creator; but that the Majesty of God should be called on, not to bless, but to curse our fellow creatures; not to feed the hungry; not to clothe the naked; but to

continue to the glutton his banquet; to the monopolist his plunder, and to the pimps and panders of a court the profits of their calling; is a prophanation without example—a blasphemy which stands alone in the annals of impiety!

I fear, Sir, we have few evidences in this country of communications with Heaven; at least our ways have been the ways of darkness: for six hundred years we have been a wretched, debilitated people; despised by other nations, because we despised one another; a resting spot for birds of passage, and a banquet for birds of prey. And these evils are still continued, not from the natural inferiority of our island in point of situation or soil, not from want of capacity and energy on the part of the natives, but because one part of our people lift their hands to their faces to bless God for the little he has given them; and because another part chuse to bless him in another way, or because a third do not chuse to bless him at all. Good God! is not a war of six hundred years, long enough to satisfy the sanguinary appetites of our countrymen? Are we never to have a truce? Is the stain of penal laws never to be purged from the statute-book? And is the taint of disqualification to hang over the wretched Catholic for ever, because he has not yet learned to bless God according to act of Parliament?—To these questions I ask no answer. I know I shall receive none. The mischief is palpable; the remedy is obvious; but the hand that can apply it, will not apply it. I am sure the Corporation will not give up their logic, and their definition, for the Good of their country. It must be confessed they have secured to *themselves* a tolerable extent of territory. I am sure their ancestors never imagined *their* domains would have been so vast. I know they did not stipulate for so much at Limerick. The Articles of Limerick secured to the Catholics the full enjoyment of all the rights, privileges, and immunities which were guaranteed to them in the reign of King Charles the Second; and these articles were approved and ratified by William and Mary, under the Great Seal of England; but a treaty which was made in time of war, and which was to put an end to the calamities of war, was broken in time of peace; as soon as the sword was hung up, civil penalties succeeded, and desolated in silence what the ravages of war had spared.

The

The Catholic was first stripped of arms, and was consequently left defenceless; he was next stripped of power over his property, and was consequently made poor; and, to complete the climax of misfortune, he was lastly stripped of the elective franchise, and was consequently left without protectors. Thus naked, shivering, and friendless, was he cast out of society, or made an alien in the land of his fathers:—and the mandate which cast him out of society is called by a wicked prophanation, “*an appeal to Heaven!*” Let it rather be called by its proper name. It was an appeal to Hell. To the honour of Protestants of former times, let it be remembered, however, that several refused to share in the guilt of such enormities. Many resigned their seats rather than pass for accomplices, and the rage for resignation became so great, that, an order was made to admit of no resignations in future, and to issue no writs for new elections. Even among those who remained, there were many who on cool reflection, would shrink from a violation of the law of nature, of nations, and of public faith. But a few artful and unprincipled men, covering their ambition with the mask of patriotism, and conjuring up the vision of a plot, a Pope, and a Pretender, to terrify the timid and the weak, hurried many well-intentioned men into a concurrence of measures from which, in more sober moments, they would have turned away with horror.

I shall dwell no longer, however, on this subject. I should rather look forward with hope, than backward with dismay. I should wish to open a new book with my countrymen of all religious persuasions, in which no *memento* should be kept of ancient crimes. I am far from being the apologist of my own party. I will not compliment the Catholics with all the virtues, nor brand the Protestants with all the crimes. Indeed our whole history is unfortunately a tissue of rapine, of devastation, and carnage, in which both parties, had their share; but instead of wasting time at present to determine the quantity of guilt which belonged to each, it is fit that the curtain should drop, and hide from us for ever the monuments of ancient hostility and re-crimination. It is time for us all to consider, not what our ancestors were, but what we and our children are to be.

Leaving

Leaving then the Corporation in possession of what they have, or what they think they have, give me leave to ask the more sober and discerning part of our Protestant brethren what they have to give? I will tell you what they have to give:—They have an House of Commons which does not reflect their image, and which does not speak their voice; they have an House of Peers, in which the Peerage is a marketable commodity; an army which encumbers them in time of peace, and is sent out of the country in time of war; an episcopacy supplied from England!—But shall I call this a grievance? The idea of grievance is lost in some of the benefits which an alien episcopacy has produced. Is there a man that hears me who does not feel proud in the acquisition of the learned, the philanthropic Bishop of Killala; a man whose mission is that of charity, and of peace; and who, like the good Bishop of Marseilles, fulfils his engagements to Heaven, by doing his duty to his fellow-creatures. But the catalogue of Protestant possession is not exhausted. They have a Police establishment, which takes away part of their property in taxes, and leaves the robber to take away the rest. A set of boroughs which have no free agency, and which sleep obedience by the side of the auctioneer's hammer. Ninety-six boroughs, I believe; and but eighty-two Members of Parliament returned by the People! What then have the Protestants to give? They have nothing but weakness, and they refuse to receive strength. Look to all their exertions for the public advantage. Look to the fate of the place bill, the pension bill, the responsibility bill. Look to all their exertions for a repeal of the police act. An utter contempt, a total overthrow! And what was the reason of this defeat? The reason is obvious. The people are not strong; or rather, we have no people at all. It has been the fashion, I know, to speak of the freedom and independence of Ireland. It is all speculation or fable. Irish liberty, such as it is, exists only on parchment. It may be in reversion for posterity, but the present generation have not the use of it. The title deeds of the estate are in Parliament, but the heirs are disinherited, or too poor, or too envious of one another to carry on the suit.

It is argued, indeed, that Catholics, if admitted to franchise, would annihilate Protestant privilege. The argument is totally groundless. It takes for granted, that Catholics and Protestants would continue their enmities and rivalships after the cause of controversy was removed; that the emancipated Catholic would think and act like the enslaved Catholic, and that the liberal Protestant would think and act like the illiberal monopolist.—Sir, Catholics and Protestants, if equal in point of civil and political rights, would not quarrel about religious creeds. Religion, if left to her altars and her churches, would not disturb the peace and good fellowship of society.—Whatever mischiefs have at any time been committed in her name, were most certainly without her authority. She was drawn into an unnatural union with politics, and the guilt of her companion was set down to her account. I am sure that religion, such as it is to be found in the Gospel, (I do not speak of it as it is to be found in a system of politics) makes no part of the present contest between Catholics and Protestants; and therefore when I use the terms Catholics and Protestants, I only mean to point out two descriptions of men who are contra-distinguished by the places they hold on the scale of politics. Political evil is the grievance of which Catholics complain to-day. They neither disturb the public quiet with eulogies on their own creeds, nor with invectives against the creeds of others; and if the Catholic in a state of slavery, speaks little of his creed, be assured that he will be totally silent on the subject, whenever he shall be raised to the condition of a freeman. I do not mean that he will cease to practise his religious duties, but that he will cease to look on religion as a mark of distinction between him and his neighbour; for let it be remembered, that persecution for creeds begets partiality for those creeds; and that liberty of conscience, while it encourages reason to examine, rubs away the asperities of prejudice, and dissolves the ties, the sympathies, and the corporation spirit, which are the centre and cement of those whom common grievances have thrown together.

It is not possible for men religiously divided, to be politically united? The objects of human thought are various, and the opinions of men concerning those objects are nearly as various. Would we not pity, however, or would we not

not laugh at men who refused to act politically together for their common advantage, because they differed in opinion concerning metaphysics, mathematics, or natural philosophy; And is it not equally absurd for men to refuse to act politically together for their common good, because they happen to differ as to religious creeds?—I say it is still more absurd; for religion is a system of duties for which man is accountable to his Creator, and not a system of duties for which one man is accountable to another. The opinions of men, of whatever kind they may be, should not be coerced.—They are not always subject even to the controul of our own wills. It may be said that opinion influences action, and therefore becomes a proper object of restraint. I grant the first part of the proposition, but I deny the last; for supposing the opinion to be noxious, yet the contingency of its operation may be remote; and as well might I give a man over to the executioner, in order to prevent a crime, which, in the range of possibility, he might, some time or other commit, as to heap penalties on opinions, because they may, some time or other, pass from speculation to practice, from the closet of men's hearts to the theatre of active life.

But on the subject of opinions, there is an error which, as it frequently occurs, deserves to be noticed; and that is, that men are always supposed to be what their ancestors were, and hardly allowed to have any original or native character of their own. Our faculties are too weak to catch the manners as they fly, and therefore we do not perceive them until they are almost past. From this indistinctness of perception, our judgments are constantly out of time and out of place. Men living at the close of the 18th century judge of one another as if they had lived at the beginning of the 17th, and thus what was once true is supposed never to be false. But time as it rolls along, produces changes not only in our faces, but in our habits, and directs to the mind new currents of tastes and opinions.

I shall not detain you with the history of those tastes and opinions as they prevailed in different ages. It is sufficient to say that Catholics themselves have felt the influence of time, and suffered their transmutations. They seem to have
 borrowed

borrowed the watch-word of Protestants of former times; for they are the Whigs of the present day; and this, among other things, serves to shew the mutability of human prejudices, and the folly of supposing them to be fixed to an anchor that never shifts its place. Every thing that comes from art is perishable.—Nothing is ever-green but what comes from the hand of nature. All the artificial habits, all the acquired prejudices of society are liable to decay, but the instincts and passions of men survive the shock of revolutions, and are the same in every age. Self-interest is the principle to which man is true, and to which even his humours direct him in every vicissitude of time, in every variation of place. This principle is the same in the breast of the Catholic and the Protestant; and what is more, the object of this principle in a national point of view, is the same for both. I say it is the interest of the Catholics and Protestants to unite, if they have common grievances to redress, and common enemies to fear; and it is their duty to unite, if the Catholic would be a gainer and the Protestant no loser, but a gainer also; and I say he would be a gainer; for liberty the more it is diffused the more it is increased; it might, perhaps, hide its head for a day, or for a week; but, like the seed committed to the lap of earth, it would germinate anew, in all the bloom and vigour of a plenteous and even redundant harvest. When I speak of Protestants, I speak of the great bulk of Protestants, whom I honour, and who are interested in the national prosperity.—I do not speak of those vultures who cling to their country in order to feed on its bowels. Sir, the emancipation of the Catholics would be a new bond for the liberties of Protestants of the first description: I allow it would be the death-warrant of those of the last. If the nation, instead of being split into parties, became itself a party, one great family; then, indeed, the infamous practice of buying the representation to tax the people, and of taxing the people in order to buy the representation, would cease; then, indeed, the constitution of Ireland would be what it ought to be; a cone which contracts as it ascends; and not an inverted cone, which contracts as it descends; and which, resting on a point, is encumbered with its own weight, and encumbers all around it.

But

But whatever may be the disposition of the Protestant mind, I hope, Gentlemen, that you will go on. Even amidst the tombs of your privileges and your rights, there dwells a *principle of resuscitation*; and that principle is the right of petition on the one hand, and the censorial power on the other.—You possess both; the one in common with other subjects, the other almost exclusively in virtue of your numbers. I ask no more. I ask but the exercise of those intellectual rights, and you must be free. I ask but the exercise of those rights which have been left you, and you must regain those which you have lost. Notwithstanding the strong tide of prejudice which is against you, you have already had the assistance of much Protestant virtue and ability. Be assured your auxiliaries will encrease. In your honourable pursuit of freedom, even Government should not throw embarrassments in your way. Governments, whatever their form may be, should consult the public inclination. The affections of the people are the best champions of the constitution; when they are gone, a mercenary army but ill supplies their place. The power of the people is more formidable than the artillery of a court; and that power to be greatest, requires only to be quiescent. “The people when put in motion are dreadful, but they are still more dreadful when they refuse to go on.” The pulse of the Castle must cease to beat if the people refuse to supply the streams of life. Such is the constitution of our nature, and so balanced is the system of human life, that the lowest man in the community is necessary to the highest. The humble cottager, if the elements be tractable and favourable, can provide with his own hands for the wants of his nature; but the haughty despot who thinks that Earth was made for his feet, Heaven for his canopy, and Mankind for his satellites, perishes the moment he is left alone. Whatever then may be our fate, whether we be admitted into the constitution or repulsed from its door, I hope we shall hear no more of denunciations of wrath, or the unfolded terrors of the British empire, directed against a numerous body of subjects whose only crime is to be miserable, and whose only presumption is to wish to be less so. A minister of state should consult some other monitor besides his passions, and

and should not in a fit of boyish intemperance, hurl defiance at a nation, as if a civil war was an affair of honour. Wisdom is not to be rejected, from whatever quarter it comes; and a few months have taught us an important lesson, that the haughty manifesto may be succeeded by humble concession; that gigantic promises may be succeeded by dwarfish performances; and that above all things, the thunders of the state are impotent when wielded by a mercenary hand, not for the benefit, but for the destruction of the people.

Mr. SWEETMAN.

Mr. Chairman, after what has fallen from the learned gentleman who has just sat down, it is not strange that I should feel myself extremely embarrassed in attempting to rise after him. The gentleman who has preceded me, has treated the subject so fully, and with so much genuine eloquence, as nearly to exhaust it, and to render any thing that I can say on it almost unnecessary. I concur with him in lamenting, that the unprovoked and illiberal attacks of *some* of our Protestant brethren have made this meeting necessary: but, Sir, as on the one hand the Catholics of Ireland have omitted no pains whatever to satisfy their Protestant brethren as to their civil and religious principles, so on the other they should not be less sedulous to remove and repel those slanders and misrepresentations which the malice of their enemies would unjustly heap upon them. Unaccustomed to any set phrase of speech, I shall proceed to express, in a plain manner, that just indignation which such a conduct naturally inspires; a conduct not less remarkable for its injustice than the insidiousness of its tendency. In doing so I shall principally confine myself to that period of our affairs which lies between the present and the last session of Parliament, as well with a view to avoid trespassing too long on your time, as to suit the capacity of a very limited understanding. I said, Sir, that the Catholics of Ireland had omitted no pains whatever to satisfy their Protestant brethren, as to every thing which concerned their civil and religious principles; and I am bound to prove the assertion. Without referring to those solemn securities which the Catholics had already

E

given

given to the country, (I mean the oaths of allegiance) permit me, Sir, to draw your attention to those of another kind, which they have since given, and within the period I allude to. Notwithstanding the oaths of allegiance, many of our Protestant brethren still entertained doubts of their sufficiency; and in consequence, they urged the necessity of our entering into some further measure, declaratory of our civil and religious principles, before they could reconcile to themselves the propriety of admitting us into the Constitution. This was no sooner suggested, than we proceeded to draw up the desired exposition of our principles in the manner required;* and so much was it to their satisfaction and ease of mind, as to meet universal approbation. Then it was that our Protestant brethren beheld us in our true shape, stripped of that patch-work coat of absurdity and ridicule, in which the foul hand of angry and unjust oppression had cloathed us. Then it was that they first began to disabuse themselves, and to rectify their opinions. "We are convinced now, said they, that your principles are different from what we conceived them to be, and that your admission into the Constitution will not endanger Protestant liberty." To this requisition should have been added another not less important; namely, a total and unqualified renunciation of any intention whatsoever of altering or disturbing the existing state of the landed possessions of the kingdom, as held under the forfeited tenures. With the same alacrity was this grand desideratum effected, and in a manner the most explicit and unequivocal. The bugbear of the forfeited lands was no longer heard to roar, and our Protestant brethren now rejoiced at seeing the property of their children placed beyond the reach of his imaginary grasp. These, Sir, are a few of the happy effects of the Declaration which is by this time signed by almost every Catholic in Ireland, and closes the proof of what I originally advanced.

After these successful efforts in the removing of every objection, we flattered ourselves we had found a resting place; but another purification was still necessary, ere we could depart from the house of bondage and enter into the
land

* Alluding to the Declaration of the Catholics, which is annexed.

land of Canaan. The elective franchise was now resisted on the ground, that it was not the general wish of the Catholics to obtain such a blessing; on the contrary, that it was but the partial desire of a few, and that therefore it would be necessary to have the true sense of that great body of the people before they could determine fairly upon the question.

This latter conclusion seemed not unreasonable, nor did the Catholics lose any time to comply with the spirit of it, by removing the objection. They accordingly adopted such measures as are usual in similar cases; and called upon their brethren to appoint Delegates, to the General Committee, in order to obtain the general sense of *all* the Catholics of Ireland.

In this manner, which is not less common than it is warrantable, were they proceeding to complete that very work which they were called upon to effect; when, shameful to relate, an outcry is raised against it by those very men that induced the necessity of the measure. The Letter containing the Plan is analysed in the Castle alembic, and nothing is heard throughout the land but Sedition, Treason, Rebellion, Byrne! The types are again made to sweat for it; and the effulgence of ascendancy erudition deigns once more to illuminate the political horizon. Wonderful letter! how far have you exceeded the simple opinions that were formed of your prowess? how far have you departed from the meaning which you were destined to convey? Surely the meaning which we affix to words must be arbitrary, or people speaking and writing the same language could not so egregiously differ in the signification of them.

But admit, for a moment, that our sage resolution-makers are in the right; this letter then, is but the effect, and our worthy brethren of the ascendancy its cause. It is therefore demonstrable, that if it be seditious, they themselves are seditious; if it be treason, they are accomplices in the treason; and base accomplices they are, for they have broken faith with their associates; they have turned approvers, King's evidences, to impeach and hang their party. They resemble the incendiary who put the lighted torch

torch to his neighbour's house, and then cried out fire! Shameful, ignoble conduct, a blot upon the name of Irishman! But after all this mighty roaring, this terrible letter proves to be neither, seditious, treasonable, or rebellious; but, on the contrary, is proved by the first law opinions of the country to be strictly legal and constitutional.—What becomes then of ascendancy learning, and sagacity? They say we are ignorant.—Irish ignorance, then, at some time or other, must have been epidemical, for they have caught the contagion, and have come in for their share of the blockheadism. But I shall not flatter them by admitting the plea of ignorance.—No, Sir, they knew full well that the whole of the measure was perfectly innocent in its nature and tendency; any thing else is a gross imposition upon the country, a feeble effort of hypocrisy. The truth is, they feared that it would prove a key to unlock the constitution to the Catholics; and that it would accelerate that happy period when the mound of private interest and monopoly must give way to the torrent of national and general advantage.

It was those galling considerations which brought down the venal artillery of the ascendancy; it was this which made them condescend to honour the Catholic cause with their slander and malevolence. But I will tell them that that cause is a deep and a pure river; and though its enemies may attempt to muddy it, they cannot, nor they shall not pollute it. He need not have been a Duke of Brunswick to have discovered that their late manœuvres were a kind of masked battery, or covered way, from whence they thought to spring a mine, and blow up Catholic emancipation.

Much is said about proffering of lives, when they well know there was no need of them. If the nation does want lives, the preference is due to us; we can supply the market on better terms. When they speak of lives they involve the question of population; and, give me leave to say, that upon that score, it is *we* that can constitute the national strength and consequence. This country would not have the name of nation, but for us. Take from its population three millions of Catholics, and you would have an unpeopled kingdom. It is our love for our country
which

which has preserved Ireland; but for us she had been long ere this an English province.—Did we emigrate, even in the midst of persecution? No. Did we take to the long-boat when the angry tempest of party spirit had hurled away our rights; or rather did we not stay by the ship, resolved to sink or swim with her? You cannot say so much for persecuted people in other countries. Much stress is laid upon our partial emancipation; but does the nation know that it was a measure absolutely necessary to prevent an abortion of their own partial emancipation? Had they not done so, would there be at this day numberless instances of Catholic individuals investing large properties in trade, and giving employment to hundreds weekly in your manufactures? Would they have a Catholic at this day their first and best contributor to their revenues? I answer, No; then would their free trade be but a name.

In like manner they speak of their love for the Constitution; but this is another piece of hypocritical affectation; they do not love, they are but jealous-pated. If they loved the Constitution, they would redeem her children. She is the common parent of the people; and all would be equally dear to her, but that they have estranged her affections, and have made a step-mother of her. In the name of common sense, when is Catholic suffering to have an end? Has the cup of our bitterness a perpetual spring within it which furnishes successive draughts never to be exhausted?—Our Protestant resolutioners, shame upon them! answer me in the dreadful affirmative. Relentless men, blasphemers against Providence, have you examined the books of the Sybils, or have you drawn the blasted information from the iniquity of your own foul hearts.

I turn from you with horror, and throw my cause upon the good sense and humanity of my countrymen of all descriptions; and here let me conjure you to reprobate this wretched baneful policy, this scourge of Ireland. Suffer me to implore you to resume that justice and noble generosity which is your characteristic; learn that the prosperity of the parts is the prosperity of the whole. Give to your Catholic brethren their just rights, and at one stroke renovate and vivify your nation. Restore to it the latent genius, the abilities, the force,
and

and above all, the hearts of three millions of its children. Then will Ireland arise from her torpor, and find her true level of national prosperity ; and you, Great-Britain, second the godlike work. “ This is the acceptable time.” It will form a bright page in your history, which the reader will contemplate with rapture. It will be a lustre to the present reign, *perhaps a prop to some future one*, and you, my Catholic brethren, summon all your virtue, nor let the chastity of your character be in any wise tarnished. Be upon your guard, nor suffer yourselves to be betrayed into any rash and inconsiderate measure by the machinations of your enemies. I need not tell you that they are upon the watch, seeking to tempt and to devour you. Consider that you hold the ’vantage ground so long as you can conduct yourselves peaceably, loyally, and with due submission to the laws. This will be your seven-fold shield. Do not cease to call upon the Legislature with temperance, candour, and perseverance ; and above all, with a becoming manliness.—*Qui timide rogat, negare docet.*

Mr. GEOGHEGAN.

After the very forcible arguments which have been advanced by the gentlemen who just addressed you, it is with the utmost diffidence I rise, to obtrude the opinions of so private an individual on your attention.—But, perhaps, Sir, on the present occasion, the less important the individual, the greater the incentive to exertion ; as to encrease the respectability of our body is the object of our proceedings.

I reflect with pleasure, Sir, on the happy consequences which must flow from our present meeting ; as it affords an opportunity to a calumniated people, of rescuing themselves from the most unfounded imputations ; and of calming those false alarms which the grossest misconceptions have given rise.—The public mind is agitated, Sir, because the Catholic question is misunderstood. Protestants have assembled in different parts of the kingdom, and censured the proceedings of the Catholic body ; it is our indispensable duty then, by an unequivocal and decided declaration of our sentiments, to do away those apprehensions ; for although, *bona fide*, they

they are visionary, yet, to use the words of our Catholic brethren of Waterford, they may exhibit to foreigners the picture of imperfect civilization ;—it is due to the national character that we should come forward ; it is essential to preserving that harmony which is the *sine qua non* of our country's prosperity, and on which alone the *real strength* of Ireland depends ; every enlightened Protestant must see the necessity of this meeting, and even those of less information, cannot but feel satisfaction on hearing an undisguised and candid disclosure of our thoughts.

The Catholic question as it is now before the public, may be reduced under three general heads :—1st. What grievances do we complain of ? 2dly, Are the privileges which have been granted last session tantamount to relief ? And 3dly, Would granting the right of suffrage be consistent with the principles of the Constitution, and the security of the present establishment ? As to the first, it cannot be necessary for me to dwell ; few men are hardy enough to deny that we are aggrieved ; to specify our grievances would take up too much of our valuable time ; it would be to detail a code of laws sufficiently extensive for the regulation of an empire ; and, for cruelty and oppression, unexampled in those climes where the sway of despotism has unmanned the human kind. Suffice it to say, Sir, their baneful effects are felt in every walk of life, from the degraded Peer to the comfortless peasant.

As to the privileges which were granted last session, let us consider for a moment how far they will operate :—Will the admission of a few gentlemen to the professions of the law, better the condition of the peasant, give respectability to the citizen, or encrease the wealth of the nation ? No ; were all the professions of the law granted to Catholics, exclusively, the great body of the people would not be benefited ; it is not the prosperity of solitary individuals that can influence the public weal, it is the prosperity of millions.—Another privilege, we are told, has been granted ; shall I call it privilege, shall I say grant—Inter-marriages between Protestants and Catholics have been legalized, and legalized with a vengeance ; the very law which sanctions the divine contract condemns it ; it
punishes

punishes the husband, by depriving him of his rights as a citizen, and holds out the affectionate partner of his life as the instrument of his degradation.—These are the mighty concessions which should demand our gratitude;—these are the important benefits with which suffering millions should rest content. Ah! Sir, what a record for posterity, of the civilization of Ireland in 1792; a people recognized by the legislature as dutiful and loyal, subjected to a debasement at which humanity must revolt.

With respect to the question, would the admission of Catholics to a share in the Elective Franchise, be consistent with the principles of the constitution, and the security of the present establishment? It is fit we should inquire here what are the principles of the Constitution? Is it not a fundamental principle of the Constitution, that the people have a right to grant their own money; or, in other words, that all who pay taxes should be represented in Parliament? Were not the Catholics in possession of this privilege several years after the revolution? If they were, surely, their right is unequivocal, and the very essence of the constitution is sapped by their exclusion.

I would ask, what is it that distinguishes the British Government as a free state? Is it not that it gives the people a share in the legislation, consisting of a democracy, monarchy, and aristocracy; it is necessary that each should act in concert with the other, and such a balance be preserved, as would prevent the preponderance of any one estate.—Such a system of government is admirably calculated to answer all the purposes of society, was it dealt out to the people in its native purity; but how is it executed in Ireland? Is the democratic power preserved? Are the three estates balanced? Does the House of Commons represent the people of Ireland, or the British Minister? Alas! the answer is to be read in the catalogue of miseries which mar your country. You are amused with the shadow of a free government, whilst the nation droops under the silent working of despotism. Again, it is to me a paradox, that bids defiance to every law of reason, why a law, which was enacted about sixty-five years since, to deprive us of the Elective Franchise, should be more a
part

part of the constitution than the revenue laws, the police laws, or the laws for establishing turnpike-gates; which have been enacted since the act of settlement. But, we are told, the church and state would be endangered, were Catholics allowed any further indulgences than they already possess. I would ask, were such eminent and respectable characters, as the gentleman who presides in your Committee, and who has raised the national consequence as a commercial state, and holds so sterling a pledge in the country, competent to be elected Governors or Directors of the National Bank, or Trustees of the Royal Exchange, would it endanger the church and state? Was a Catholic physician permitted to teach the art of healing in our University, would it endanger the church and state?—Ridiculous pretexts; it is not the church and state, it is a monopoly, which preys on the very vitals of the constitution, that is in danger. We know that Presbyterianism is the established religion in Scotland, and the Catholic the established religion in Canada, not only without danger, but with important advantage to the British Government*. But, surely, Sir, those Protestant gentlemen cannot be serious, who express alarm at our seeking to be incorporated with them for our mutual advantage, and the good of our common country.—We are not seeking the naked theoretical Rights of Man; it is the established practical Rights of Citizens; it is the privileges of British subjects; it is those privileges which the constitution warrants; and I trust that the day is not far distant, when the light of philosophy shall have erected the empire of reason on the ruins of bigotry and intolerance; when religious and political distinction shall expire together; and the British constitution, founded on the broad basis of freedom, shall be as well the pride of every Irish subject, as the envy and admiration of surrounding

* In Scotland the Protestant Church dare not erect a steeple or toll a bell; Presbyterian ascendancy is supported there in all its branches and details, by the British Government.—How is this reconcilable with the opinion, that Protestant ascendancy is essential to the very existence of the British Constitution, when another *establishment* is permitted, so near the seat of Government? The happy effects which arise from the establishment of a Presbyterian ascendancy in Scotland, and Catholic ascendancy in Canada, unquestionably evince the wise policy of contenting the majority of the people.

surrounding nations ; and that supported by millions of freemen, united to it from interest, it will *resist* the revolutions of ages ; and *yield* but to the annihilation of all human institutions.

Mr. WARREN.

Sir, after what has been advanced by other gentlemen, it is unnecessary for me to urge this assembly to adopt a vindication of our body from the false calumnies propagated through the nation, by the *learned and respectable* Corporation of the City of Dublin. However, Sir, I will beg leave briefly to state my sentiments on this great subject, CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION.

After a century of pains and penalties, the Catholics of Ireland, three-fourths of its inhabitants, come forward in an humble and constitutional manner to ask relief ; to seek, by petition, the redress of their grievances ; a privilege allowed to the slave in Constantinople, but forbidden to the Irish slave by the *historical* Corporation of the capital of the Imperial Kingdom of Ireland. Sir, it is not to the *selfish monopolist* the Catholics appeal. They appeal to the disinterested and the liberal ; they desire to be judged by their countrymen as they are, not as they are misrepresented ; whether that misrepresentation issues from the Grand-Jury room, or the *immaculate* Corporation of the City of Dublin.

Sir, there is no greater proof of the degraded state of the Catholics of Ireland, than the eternal doom now pronounced by those bodies against them ; if they could vote at elections, their Protestant brethren would acknowledge them to be what they are, as good and as loyal subjects as themselves, and as much attached to the constitution of Ireland.

There is no man in England or Ireland admires the great principles of the constitution more than I do ; and no part of it more than that which establishes the right of the subject to petition for redress of grievances, real or imaginary, individually or collectively.—This right answers two great objects ; it admits the subject to state his grievances,

ances, and is the proper mode of communication between the Sovereign, the Parliament, and the People. It is therefore the duty of the King and Parliament to receive the petition of the people with respect and attention, not to treat them with *contumely*. Sir, if proper regard were paid by the Ministers of every Sovereign in Europe, and *in due time*, to the grievances of the people, you would not have so many revolutions and rumours of revolutions ringing in your ears; America would never have been separated from Great-Britain; Louis the XVI. would never have been dethroned.—But it seems to be the blind policy of all Ministers to contaminate the voice of the people; and if they did not calumniate their honourable pursuits, Sovereigns would not be considered so deaf to the representations of their subjects; they would hear and redress their grievances; and, instead of revolutions all around you, you would have substituted a reform of abuses, the abolition of corruption, the reduction of taxes, and equal protection and freedom to every class of citizens.

Sir, during my time, I have heard much of the various tumultuous risings of the people in this kingdom, from North to South, under the different appellations of Steel Boys, Oak Boys, White Boys, Peep of Day Boys, and Defenders. There is no man feels or abhors more than I do, the abominable depredations committed by those various denominations of rioters, as they occasionally sprung up. They have been a disgrace to the nation; at the same time, I say, they are not the effect of the natural disposition of the people, or their mode of religious worship; though attributed to both by artful and designing men. There are no peasantry in Europe more amenable to the laws, or affectionate to their landlords. When I offer to vindicate them in this manner, lest my opinion should be deemed partial, I will take this opportunity of quoting what was the result of the celebrated Mr. Arthur Young's tour through Ireland, speaking on this very subject; he is an English gentleman, of very great learning and science, neither placeman, pensioner, or monopolist: he observes in his *Ild.* vol. p. 42, “ From all which it is
“ manifest, that the gentlemen of Ireland never thought
“ of the radical cure, from overlooking the real disease;
“ which,

“ which, in fact, lay with themselves, and not in the
 “ wretches they doomed to the gallows ; let them change
 “ their conduct entirely, and the poor will not long
 “ riot. Treat them like men who ought to be as free as
 “ yourselves ; put an end to that system of religious perse-
 “ cution, which for seventy years, has divided the king-
 “ dom against itself ; in those two circumstances lies the
 “ cure of insurrection ; perform them completely, and
 “ you will have an affectionate poor, instead of discon-
 “ tented vassals.”

In my opinion, it is religious toleration, not proscrip-
 tion, that expands the heart, and enlarges the faculties of
 the human understanding ;—therefore, I would wish, that
 no man should be proscribed his rank in society, whatever
 may be his mode of worship, but equal liberty to *all*, and
 every man his own way to Heaven.

Mr. KEOGH.

Mr. Chairman, we have all listened with pleasure to the
 manly and patriotic sentiments expressed this day ; men
 capable of feeling and uttering those sentiments, ought not
 to be slaves. One word only that has fallen, I submit,
 should be altered. In speaking of our oppressors, they
 have inadvertently denominated them “ *the Protestants.*” I
 deny the fact—the Protestants of Ireland are not our op-
 pressors ; all that is eminent for virtue, talents, and public
 spirit among our Protestant brethren, are our defenders—
 the defenders of their country. See, Sir, at their head, that
 man, sent for no common purpose—chosen to redeem a
 nation, to raise a grateful people.

Look to that truly Protestant part of Ireland, the North ;
 see Belfast, the seat of patriotism. Can you not, with pride,
 claim them as your steady and early friends. Look to the
 Declarations of the several Societies of United Irishmen,
 particularly those of Dublin, and the four Societies at
 Belfast. See the Declarations of the Volunteers, rising once
 more from their lethargy, to raise their degraded Country.
 —Look to the Bar, the Protestants of the county of Cork,
 of the county of Wexford, many in every county and
 city, and then say, are not the true patriot Protestants with
 us ?

us ? Let us then, when we speak of our oppressors, strike out the term *Protestants*, and substitute *Monopolists*.

Sir, for more than a year, we have beheld the melancholy exhibition of the great Catholic Body of this nation misrepresented and aspersed ; if any thing could aggravate this, it was to see it encouraged by those whose duty, from their situation, it was to promote the harmony and peace of the country.

It was easy to believe, that many candid, unsuspecting Protestant gentlemen have been influenced by the alarms disseminated from such quarters, who otherwise would have spurned at the idea of acting as *Under Negro Drivers* against their unoffending countrymen.

Hence these resolutions against four-fifths, of Ireland, that fill our public prints, and disgrace this nation.

But the mischief does not stop here ; what effect must it have on our national character in America, and all the countries on the Continent, or even upon our fellow-subjects in England ? Does not every person lately arrived from that country, say, that is generally thought there, that we are very little short of a state of Infurrection.

When we look around us, and see every thing in its usual state of profound tranquility ; when we meet in private parties, or other places, the very men who publish those resolutions against us, and find them laugh it off, as a political play, we are led to look on the extravagant assertions in these resolutions with silent contempt. But for one moment, let us consider what we ourselves would think if the same play, or farce, or tragedy, was now acting in England.

Ask yourselves the effect it would have on you, if the majority of the Grand-Juries of England proclaimed to the world, that four-fifths of his Majesty's subjects in England were entering into proceedings tending to *riot, tumult, and sedition* ? but suppose the Ministers of the State abetted and countenanced such false assertions, what an alarm would it give you ? What apprehensions would it create in Europe ? But in England they are a *People* ; and the Minister that
would

would dare traduce the character, or endanger the credit of the nation, would *lose his head!* What is the present situation of Ireland? It is this—A few monopolists find it *their own* private interest, to keep above three millions of men in slavery—that the Catholics, independent of the right of every subject, of a certain property to the elective franchise, and the benefits of the trial by Jury, are justly entitled thereto, by a treaty between them and King William, for which they gave the most valuable consideration; that they were finally stripped of this privilege, and without any pretext the treaty was violated in the *last Reign*, that of George the 2d, without even a charge of political crime or delinquency. Thus situated, they mean to exercise the most humble of all rights—the right to petition his Majesty and the Parliament, that they be restored to these privileges, so purchased, paid for, and guaranteed to them; and this petition is to be prepared, not by a mob, or men who would have an interest in confusion, but by Catholic Gentlemen, whose characters and property are a security for their peaceable intentions; and it is determined to be done in the most dutiful terms, and most constitutional manner.

But the monopolists, enemies to us, and enemies to Ireland, fear, lest our gracious Monarch should be apprised of the state of his faithful subjects, the Catholics of Ireland, and know, unequivocally the justice and moderation of their wishes; they dread the cool examination of such a question; and therefore alarms are attempted to be raised, distrusts and jealousies excited between the King and his faithful people, and between the Protestants and Catholics; for they know there is not one candid man in Ireland or England, if the question were fairly discussed, who would not be shocked at the idea, that three or four families should, to support their monopoly, hold three or four millions of victims in slavery.

But the Catholics abhor the idea of riot, tumult, or sedition; we will appeal to our Protestant countrymen, and to the world, whether we have not been goaded to tumult, by every insult, neglect, and contempt from the Government in Ireland. In stating this, we will not follow Grand-Juries, in asserting and censuring without proof;
the

the best vindication of the Catholics is their conduct; let us then examine the transactions of the last two years.

In 1790, we prepared a petition to Parliament, so humble and modest, as to ask nothing specific, but merely that our case should be taken into consideration. The Catholics, with humble diffidence, waited on Government, to beseech their protection and support; but in vain. We applied to have our petition introduced to the House, but no Member of the Commons would bring it in; for we, three millions of people, were not represented there, and the hand of power was raised against us.

If we were inclined to riot or tumult, it would now have shewn itself; but we were not—all was humility.

The Chief Governor visited the South of Ireland. It was intimated to our brethren in Cork, that an address, or expression of their loyalty, would be acceptable; they prepared one. Let us here call to mind the superior claims of the Catholics of Cork on government, and on their country. When the empire seemed shaken to its center, by the contest with America, when the fleets of the enemy hovered on their coast, did they prepare to join them? No. These brave and generous Irishmen disdained, in that exigency, to say, "Ease us of our chains first, and we will then join you." They forgot their sufferings; they forgot every thing but their loyalty and their love to their country. They supported government with their money; and armed themselves, and flew to the ranks with their Protestant brethren.

This truly noble class of citizens, the Catholics of Cork, in the expression of their loyalty to the Lord Lieutenant, declared their determination to persevere in their past line of conduct, from which they HOPED some relaxation of the present Code of Laws. Will it be believed, that such men would receive such treatment as I am now to mention, any where on this side Constantinople? The paper was returned to them, to strike out the clause which expressed a HOPE, and afterwards it would be received; but our brethren felt this insult and ingratitude with indignation. They did not by their own act, confirm or approve their slavery; they

they with held the address, and they kept all they had to keep—they kept THEIR HONOR.

Did this treatment excite the Catholics to tumult or sedition, of which the Grand Juries seem so apprehensive? No, Sir;—they felt like men, and bore it like subjects willing to distinguish between a gracious King, and a Viceroy influenced by monopolists.

The patience and the perseverance of the Catholics were not yet exhausted; they made their final application to the Government for relief. They deputed twelve of their body, in 1791, to go to the Castle with a list of the penal code, and intreat the protection of Government, to remove *any part* they themselves thought fit.

The humility of the people could only be surpassed by the contempt of the Castle. They did not deign even to give us a *civil refusal*.—Three millions of subjects were not thought worthy of an answer!

In this state of almost unqualified despair, surely if the Catholics were inclined to sedition, or to tumult, they would at least have a pretext. Was there the slightest appearance? No. not a shadow.

One experiment was yet untried; the Catholics undertook it; they deputed ONE of their own body to go to London, to make the sufferings and the merits of the Catholics of Ireland known to his Majesty, through the medium of his ministers.—Your Deputy went to England in September, 1791, and returned in January, 1792, with a right to believe, that if our Parliament would open to us the Law, Grand-Juries, County Magistrates, and High Sheriffs, that no opposition would occur from England; and that elective franchise was under consideration. We have heard it insisted on eagerly here, that these objects were not *promised* in England. No one ever said they were promised; we know no person is qualified to promise what the Parliament will do; and we know his Majesty's efficient Ministers in England form no actual part of the Irish Government; but we know the Irish Government is appointed and dismissed at pleasure, and that the recommendation of the efficient Minister of England, like that
of

of the King to make a Bishop, seldom fails. There may be slanderous men of an opinion, (against which I protest) that if it had been the wish of England to encrease taxes, to continue the hearth-money on our wretched poor, and exact it from those who have not the luxury of a chimney, and through whose door alone the smoke can go forth, or to persist in an equal collecting of tithes, the oppression and general detestation of the people—such orders might have found advocates here; but to relieve three millions of people, and invigorate the Constitution, was a measure not to be borne by our enemies, the monopolists of Ireland. Our relief was opposed with strong remonstrances, the Catholics misrepresented, by assertions, that they did not require it; the trained bands of Dublin called forth; and in fine, a bill was brought in, to admit Catholics to the law only, which afforded our poor no relief; and even while carrying on this delusive and inadequate measure, the Catholic body was misrepresented and insulted by the very men who supported the bill.

The Catholics, while the bill depended, presented an humble petition, to be restored to some participation in the elective franchise; and, three days after, their petition was taken off the table, and *voted to be rejected*, without debating its merits. Among the many reasons alledged for this unprecedented and ungracious procedure, it was strongly objected, that the petition was signed by Citizens only, unauthorised to act or speak for the body at large. The Catholics conceived themselves thus called upon, when they next petitioned, to remove the objection made in Parliament, by procuring the Catholic country gentlemen to meet, and sign the next petition; and for this purpose, the Catholic Committee wrote a Letter, signed by Edward Byrne, as Chairman, to procure Delegates from the counties, for the purpose, as expressed in that Letter, of “ imploring his Majesty and Parliament, to be restored to the elective franchise, and an equal participation of the benefits of the trial by Jury.

And here is the letter on which is founded a false and malicious clamour, that the Catholics are disposed to riot, tumult and sedition—but not content with these charges,

the Catholics intending to "*implore* Parliament," is construed into an outrageous and atrocious crime—the intending to overawe Parliament! Charges of so wicked a nature are not made against a meritorious and unoffending people without design. It is time to strip off the veil that covers our oppressors; every man interested in his country by property, children, or patriotism, must feel indignant at the avowed determination to continue three or four millions of people in slavery. It is time to speak out! I say; therefore, it is to pre-occupy the mercy of the throne, and the wisdom and benevolence of our Protestant fellow-subjects, that these fears are affected; that Grand-Juries are induced to forget their institution, and twenty-three men to erect themselves into a fourth estate, to deter *a whole people* from petitioning for relief. Punishment implies a crime; we are punished without a pretext, and refused even the privilege to complain.

It must become a matter of serious concern to his Majesty, if informed, and to those Ministers in whom he confides the empire, to every Irishman who has property, children, or love of his country, that men so little skilled in managing mankind, whose means have uniformly tended to produce effects contrary to their expectations, should yet have the power of continuing such rashness as may plunge us finally into a state, of which no one can think without horror. To prove these apprehensions not groundless, it is necessary to shew what means have been taken to arouse the spirit and indignation of the Catholics.

I have already mentioned the fate of the petition in 1790, the treatment of our respectable brethren in Cork, and our last application to the Castle. Even these contempts had no effect on the public mind; by long habits of slavery they had lost a sense of liberty;—they bowed down as heretofore;—the kingdom was not agitated then, nor would it have been since, but for these monopolists themselves. We all have reason to rejoice at their blunders; but we have equal reason to be alarmed for the nation and its peace, when we see them entrusted to such hands.—Their first measure was one, not of wisdom, but of cunning. A gentleman was sent for to the county of Louth, and under a
promise

promise made to him, which was afterwards broke, they obtained a certain address, intended to insinuate, that the Catholics did not wish for liberty but as the exigency of the times permitted; as if there was or could be, an exigence to keep the great majority of the nation in an abject slavery, discouraging to industry and spirit. The Catholics who promoted these addresses, I shall not now bring forward; they have sunk in the esteem of the Catholic body—have lost all confidence—they stand alone, suspected by Protestants and despised by the Catholics; and will, we hope, never appear in our affairs again. But for the Catholic gentlemen, at a distance, who signed on the assurance of the promise made, no one ought, no one does blame them; they knew not of the negociations in England; they did not see the deceit intended; had they done so, many of them would, I know, cut off their right hands, rather than sign an address, intended to keep their children in slavery.

At this crisis, some persons in high station were candidly told, that if these addresses were pursued, they would probably call forth disavowals, and agitate the country. This caution was rejected; they plunged forward, published the address.—The Catholics of many counties and towns were roused, for the first time, and naturally met to disclaim the sentiment, or any right of interference, except by persons authorized by them.—The friends of monopoly in several counties, pressed for similar addresses. I think they obtained sixty-eight names;—but it was quite immaterial if they obtained as many hundreds, or even thousands; for the papers, full of addresses and counter-addresses, agitated the Catholic mind on their slavery and hopes, and right to liberty;—and thus the monopolists forced a question for general discussion; and, but for that beginning, a meeting, like this which I now address, would not have taken place for another century.

A much more interesting and important circumstance occurred about that period.—The North of Ireland, the seat of spirit and patriotism, had appeared exhausted with their useless efforts at Dungannon, and at the Convention; their attempts were baffled and laughed to scorn by the monopolists.

monopolists.—The spirit seemed to be extinguished; but it was not dead; it only slept.

Some patriots there, reflecting that liberty could only be obtained by a people united in interest and friendship, began to consider, whether the Catholic body was so much sunk by slavery, as not to be capable of liberty;—to agree in dropping the curtain over all past animosities, and, by mutual forgiveness, to bury prejudice and religious bitterness. These true patriots prudently sounded the ground before they decided.—The monopolists heard of this meditated coalition, and rebrobated it violently. The Catholics, afraid of their task-masters, less enlightened than the North, would, I candidly believe, have dreaded to embrace even liberty, when presented by a Presbyterian;—for their friendship, which is now our pride, we then feared;—we doubted their sincerity;—monopolists told us that they were themselves our only friends. At this crisis, nothing could have decided us but Administration; they spurned us;—they threw us off with contumely and disdain; and, in the same instant, opened our eyes to see in themselves our oppressors, and our friends in the friends of Ireland.—But they did not stop here.—We petitioned Parliament last February to be restored to elective franchise; it was received, and might have been suffered to sleep in quiet and unnoticed;—but this would have been a prudent measure, and, therefore, it was not adopted.—The humble petition of the Catholics was called from its oblivion, and formally rejected; but not without a previous debate, on the strong ground of the subject's right to petition, and the rashness of insulting four-fifths of the country. This very debate interested and agitated the whole kingdom. But Belfast, sincere beyond profession, petitioned Parliament to restore us to freedom;—the petition of that great, spirited, wealthy town was also taken from the table, and rejected with expressions of marked contempt;—and thus our petitions met one fate. Our common enemies have united us in misfortune:—we accept the offer; and let it be our prayer to the Almighty Ruler of all events, to bind up our interests with those of our countrymen, and let us fall or rise together!

(Here Mr. Keogh was interrupted by loud and repeated plaudits.)

Now,

Now, Sir, suffer me to contrast two or three measures intended for our oppression with the consequences which they produced. The wanton and unnecessary rejection of our petition compelled our friends in Parliament to debate it on the ground of right; and to our cause discussion is always victory. The principle of that rejection produced the almost universal concurrence of the Catholics in returning Delegates to the General Committee, a measure pregnant with advantage to our cause. The unwarrantable attacks of the different Grand-Juries have not only roused our own spirit, but called forth many and able defenders among our Protestant brethren; men whose talents and whose characters would do honor to any cause. Thus, Sir, by the blunders of our oppressors they have brought the Catholics forward a century, in eagerness for liberty, which now engrosses the thoughts and wishes of every individual among us.

But they had yet an opportunity for another error, and they seized it. Some among them, more artful than others, though not more honest, wished to insinuate, that though the Catholics could not now be granted liberty, yet *the day might come* when it should be granted. I presume those gentlemen meant *the day of judgment*! yet even that would not serve our driving, precipitate monopolists; they tore off the veil, and explained to the most ignorant their intentions; *their sentence is eternal*; they doom us and our children to perpetual slavery! God, in his wrath, threatens but the fourth generation even of those who hate him; but we, who love our King, obey the laws, even those laws that grind us to the earth, are doomed, ourselves and our posterity, to continue slaves through all generations! What, Sir, are the hearts of our oppressors hardened as Pharaoh? Are they incapable of instruction, from the awful lessons of France or America? Well might the man doomed to be the Saviour of his Country, cry out—that such a sentence, required the power of a God, and the malignity of a daemon.

In this state of oppression, it seems to be a means of commendation to favour, to insult the people; and the more wanton and unprovoked the insult, the more meritorious.—

What

What else could induce one impudent despot to say, ours was "a religion held only by knaves and fools!" This *modest* man attacks half Europe at a stroke; but such asperision proceeds from the *purity* of his own blood; a man who has not in himself, or in his family, any thing to correct, looks abroad, and is astonished at the vice of his neighbour. Those differently circumstanced are silent. He that has in his own blood a man deformed with every vice, a blasphemer, ravisher, and murderer—such a man would rest contented under the infamy of his own name, and not make a wanton and unprovoked attack on the character or feelings of others.—Yet may I ask this *mild* censor, whether the unoffending posterity of even such a monster, ought, for the multiplied villainies of their ancestor, to be for ever sentenced or proscribed from rising in Church or State?

But, for a few days past, there are threatening whispers about a military force. I must confess I cannot give any credit to such reports, because that would not depend solely on our monopolists; it would include a higher sanction, therefore I cannot believe it.—We have a gracious King; we have been at all times faithful to him and to his family. He is surrounded by men of acknowledged abilities. Mr. Pitt, the Premier, possesses a high character in the empire;—his own glory—his fame with posterity, will on such a subject make him weigh well, as becomes a wise minister, what may be the consequence of such a measure: He will not follow the rashness of our monopolists, he will estimate the gain and the loss of such a measure.

If military force be used, and with success, what is the advantage? Why they force three millions of peaceable subjects, as good as any in Europe, by this ill treatment, to be three millions of discontented subjects. This would be truly, in the language of our countryman, "to gain a loss." But force does not absolutely imply success, we may learn from many instances; and lately from a very remarkable one. If, therefore, such a measure be attempted, *and fail*, I will leave to men bolder and wiser than me to tell the consequence. But what is our crime? Why are we to be dragooned? Would such a measure serve our King? No.
Would

Would it serve our fellow-subjects in England? No. Do we wish a separation from the empire, or from England? (a number of voices cried out—No—No—No) Do we want to alter the present Constitution of Kings Lords and Commons? (a cry—No—No—No)—Is not our prayer, to be admitted into it, to be represented in the Commons house, by Protestant representatives, and to strengthen and defend the constitution against any innovation? What have we done, or what do we mean to do, but to exercise the humblest of all rights, the right of petition? Why then all this clamour, all this abuse, all these unjust insinuations of riot, tumult, and sedition; and what is yet more atrocious, of overawing the Legislature? I am ashamed to answer. Three or four families of monopolists find it convenient to hold in slavery three or four millions of faithful subjects, and the language of those over whom they have influence, proves they are not very delicate about dictating to the King and Parliament in turn; for which read the Address of the Corporation.

In truth all advantages his Majesty can wish, or England seek, will be encreased by our freedom; three millions of naked men will be customers to the English manufacturers; and we will then be interested in the glory of the empire. Is it necessary to drive to despair the Catholics, who man one-third of that navy upon which the glory and defence of the empire depends? Would it be wise to force the Catholics to withhold themselves?

The resolutions express alarm; they defeat themselves; twenty-three gentlemen in a county talk of tumult and sedition, and publish their decree of eternal slavery, surrounded by *One hundred thousand* Catholics in each county; and has a single man been insulted or attacked for this cruelty? Not one instance. Indeed it brings its own refutation. But it is our business to entreat our people to continue their peaceable conduct, and not be tempted by any ill treatment to resistance. We know the goading in Louth; we know the military excursions, when the people were warm at their merriments, and may guess the design. We also have heard of the *noble* Peep-of-day Boy;—but let us hope he will cease his cruelty, and grant some relief to his
miserable

miserable tenantry, to whom he refused liberty to cut turf;—let us hope that he will cease to be the scourge of the poor.—If I now say no more, it is because I see the benevolent Resolutions of the Volunteers at Rathfryland and Ballymoney; and their sentiments will, I trust, influence us all with mutual affection. But suppose, for a moment, the evil genius of the empire prevailed, and the measures for our slavery were persisted in, the Catholics will not resist. Will his Majesty and Parliament give them leave to emigrate, if France obtains, as we trust in God she will, a peaceable, settled, free government? Is there any encouragement in her power that she would not hold out to induce us to settle there?—The commercial wealth and industry of Ireland, there is no small part of it in the hands of Catholics. My respectable friend near me * pays the revenues of this country 80,000l. a year. Suppose the Catholics, roused and encouraged by France, pouring into that country, but a two days passage from Cork, with our wealth, our industry, commercial talents, manufactures, money to carry them on;—what a proud day for France! What a disgrace to the empire, to banish such subjects, in such an age, to support, a corrupt, rotten, and unjust system of monopoly and oppression;—but should such an event take place, should not our countrymen admit us to liberty, we will not go, numerous as we are, unaccompanied; those Protestants who detest despotism, the noblest and best spirits of the land, will quit this region of slavery with us, and leave our common tyrants, the monopolists, execrated by our King, and despised by all Europe, to rule as they may the country which they have depopulated.

One objection to our being restored to the right of elective franchise is, we would then govern the politics of Ireland; is it not enough to say, there would not be one Catholic voter for twenty Protestants; and that Catholics must vote for a Protestant; that when we had twenty times our present landed property we had that privilege, and so far from influencing the counsels of Ireland, we were not able to preserve that right;—and, after all, would not Catholic freeholders vote for their landlords, if good men and patriots

* Mr. Edward Byrne.

patriots?—and they could only increase their freeholds by obtaining future confidence by their conduct, from their Protestant landlords.

The corporation tell the kingdom very gravely, “ that the last session of Parliament left the “ Roman Catholics “ in no wise different from their Protestant fellow- “ subjects, save only in the exercise of political power ; ” it is a *kind* information, of which we were ignorant. The only answer necessary is, to read you a few, not the entire of the laws still in force, which I copied from a book published by the United Irishmen of Dublin, or rather from a preface of their Chairman, the Hon. Simon Butler, a gentleman whose public spirit and patriotism has rendered his name dear to his country, and demands the gratitude and affection of every Catholic. By this gentleman’s labours we are enabled to answer such assertions as those of the corporation of Dublin ; I shall read, with your permission, the abstract I have taken.

We are deprived of education in our University, and none can obtain degrees, who have not taken test-oaths, and declarations, which entirely exclude Catholics.

We cannot *erect* or endow either College or University. We cannot *endow* a school. A Catholic cannot instruct any Protestants in his school ; or become under-master, assistant, or usher to a Protestant school-master.—Any convert, who becomes Justice of Peace, and educates any of his children Catholics, is to be imprisoned one year, forfeit 100*l.* and be incapable to be executor, administrator, or guardian.

A Protestant may marry a Catholic, by a law passed in the year 1792, but he must forfeit his elective franchise ; and if married by a Catholic Priest, it is null, and the Clergyman may be *hanged* !

No Catholic of any property, banker, merchant, or gentleman, not even those resident in the country, can keep any weapon, even for self defence. If summoned, a child must inform against his father, or father must give evidence against his child ; nay, they must discover against themselves ; otherwise any Catholic gentleman, let his character, consequence, or property, however eminent, may,

H

by

by order of a Magistrate, suffer the punishment inflicted on the vilest criminals; whipped or pillored, as in the Magistrate's discretion; if a Peer or Peerefs, and not pillored or whipped, then to be fined 300l.—persons inferior 50l. for the first offence—for a second offence, a forfeiture lands and goods, and confinement. The only exception to this law is, a licence from the Lord Lieutenant and Privy Council, a favour attainable by very few. Our interest is not, I fear, very strong in that quarter. I omitted stating, that houses of Catholics may be entered forcibly, even by night, to search for arms.

The laws on the exercise of religion are many and severe; one leaves a clergyman liable to transportation, if officiating even at a burial.

It is said all these are obsolete; but the fact is otherwise. An attempt has lately been made to enforce this abominable law against a clergyman of exemplary piety, a gentleman by birth, of the respectable family of the O'Connor's of Ballinagare, in the county Roscommon, whose crime was saying the Psalm "From the Deep, I have cried out to thee, O Lord," in the church yard of Castlerea, in the county of Roscommon. A Catholic cannot enjoy an estate, which descends from, or is willed to him by a Protestant, in any manor or borough whose inhabitants send members to Parliament; or if a Catholic purchases the fee of lands in such borough or manor, they are forfeited to a Protestant discoverer, and such discoverer can compel a Catholic to give evidence against his own property.

But there is a law more horrible, wicked, and unjust than all these, calculated to render the dearest ties the source of wretchedness. No Catholic whatsoever has his personal property secure; the law invites and encourages the disobedient or unnatural son to conform, and to deprive him of it. A great share of the wealth of Ireland is in Catholic hands, in manufactures, commerce, agriculture and grazing. A reprobate son may have the entire seized by order of a Judge, and the unhappy father does not, even by the surrender of his all, purchase his repose; he may be attacked by new bills; and if his future industry

is

is successful, he may be stripped of the fruits of that also.

In respect to franchises ; we are taxed in three several places where we are not represented :—taxed at Vestries, taxed by Grand-Juries, taxed in Parliament. We neither can serve on the two first, nor be represented in the last. A foreigner is allowed a jury, half foreigners, half natives. The Catholic, in his native land, less privileged than even a foreigner, is not permitted to have a Catholic on his jury in any action between a Protestant and Catholic. A Catholic is excluded from the army—the revenue—the law—the magistracy.

These are only a part of the many laws that afflict this country. This is the reward for the best subjects in Europe, for loyalty and submission, and peaceable conduct, and the payment of immense taxes.

The Corporation exclaim—“ One hundred years are just elapsed since the question was tried upon an appeal to Heaven. The great ruler of all things decided in favour of our ancestors—he gave them victory, &c.”

I shall not enter into the appeal to Heaven, which would equally defend every despotism in Europe, and be as strong a reason against Protestant as Catholic liberty ; neither will I dwell on the blasphemy of calling the Almighty as a confirmer of the slavery of the people ; but as the subject is forced upon us, though the Catholics will not *contend ancestry* with the Corporation of Dublin, yet, we will stand excused for clearing up the historical fact, and proving, that neither arms nor victory placed us nor them in the present situation.

We are all sensible of the design of these bold contradictions of fact. We know that in Ireland and England there are thousands of candid conscientious Protestants, who take their opinion on the credit of such historians as the Dublin Corporation, but who would turn with abhorrence from a breach of faith or agreement ; I speak of them from knowledge ; it is my pride that I have friendships with Protestants equally with Catholics. If they once reflect that their fathers obtained certain great considerations

tions from ours ; that armed cities were given up, when they could be defended, on the special agreement of our having rights, among which are the Elective Franchise and Trial by Jury ; that these valuable considerations were given, relying on Protestant faith, that in consequence we enjoyed these privileges, and were not finally stript of them until the late reign of George II. when in profound peace, without any delinquency or pretended crime on our part, these rights, thus purchased and guaranteed, were wrested from us. Let these facts be clearly stated, and there is not a man of honour, honesty, or of fair dealing in either kingdom, but will cry out against such a breach of public faith, equally as they would censure any man for breaking contract, engagement, or bargain individually with themselves.

The facts are :—The army of King William besieged Limerick in vain ; they fought bravely, the town was as bravely defended, and finally they were compelled to raise the siege.

They began a second siege in August 1691, and would most probably have been again defeated. The garrison were brave and disciplined troops, well supplied with provisions, the winter was approaching, it was now October ; the rain set in ; King William was engaged in a war with France ; and a strong reinforcement had actually failed from that country, under Chateau Renault, with forty ships of war and large transports, three thousand troops, two hundred officers, and ten thousand stand of arms.—These facts were known to the besieged and to the besiegers. In this state General Ginckle, by order of Government, offered honourable terms to the Catholics, on condition, that they gave up Limerick, and all the other places in Ireland held by them ; for the Catholics had still forces in Cork, Clare, Kerry, Sligo, and Mayo. It was also proposed to guarantee to the Catholics, even to those in arms, all their estates of freehold, and all privileges and immunities which the Catholics enjoyed or were entitled to, in the reign of Charles II. or since ; a stipulation which fully includes the elective franchise and trial by jury. Part of the agreement or capitulation, called the civil articles, were agreed to the 3d of October, 1691.

1691. The reinforcement with Chateau Renault arrived in the bay of Dingle, the 6th of October, 1691.—The town was yet in the Catholics' possession, and they were arranging the military articles.

Some officers of the garrison urged Lord Lucan and Lord Gallmoy, the commanders of the Irish army, to break off the treaty, alledging that they could now raise the siege, which would give such spirits to the Catholics, and so depress the besiegers, that they might yet recover Ireland; and the more so as they were certain of more aid from France. What was the reply of Lords Lucan and Gallmoy? They said they considered themselves pledged in honor to deliver up Limerick and Ireland to the Protestants; and they did so, depending on their faith and truth to preserve inviolate the rights of the Catholics under the articles. The military treaty was concluded on the 19th of October, thirteen days after the reinforcement arrived; and that day the Irish-town of Limerick was given up, and all the other places of strength immediately after; but the English-town of Limerick remained some time longer in the possession of the Catholics, who were to march out with all military honours. History records few examples of a treaty so solemnly ratified and confirmed.

The civil treaty was signed by General Ginckle the 3d of October, 1691, the military treaty by General Ginckle the 19th of October, 1691. The treaty was confirmed and signed by the then Lords Justices, Porter and Conynghby. It was afterwards confirmed by King William and Queen Mary, under the Great Seal of England, and finally by an act of Parliament, the 9th of William III. *ses.* 4. chap. 27.

Under this treaty, thus solemnly ratified, for the most important considerations, the Catholics enjoyed the elective franchise, and the benefit of trial by Jury, until the reign of Geo. II.—at that period, the Parliament of this country having surrendered her own independence to England—having no noble or patriotic objects to fill their mind—descended, as might be expected from slaves, to tyrannize over those who had the misfortune to be within their grasp;—the unoffending and peaceable Catholics had voted for patriotic candidates in the counties of Galway and
Kerry

Kerry, and without pretence of any crime on their parts, this privilege was wrested from them by the very members they elected ; if that were constitutional, perhaps disfranchising any description of the present Protestant electors could be equally defended.—We now come, appealing to our country for that tardy justice so long due to our merits ; and relying on Protestant faith, justice, and honor.

The Question being then put on Mr. M'DONNEL's motion, it was agreed to unanimously ; and a Committee consisting of the following Gentlemen, viz.

<i>RANDAL M'DONNEL,</i>	<i>THOMAS RYAN,</i>
<i>JOHN KEOGH,</i>	<i>THOMAS WARREN,</i>
<i>HUGH HAMILL,</i>	<i>CHARLES RYAN,</i>
<i>EDWARD BYRNE,</i>	<i>JOHN BALL,</i>

was ordered to prepare an Answer to said Letter of the Corporation of the City of Dublin, and to report the same forthwith :

And the Committee so appointed, having reported accordingly.

RESOLVED,

THAT the Declaration which follows be published as the Unanimous Act of this Meeting.

That we embrace this opportunity to repeat our Thanks to the illustrious Characters in both Houses of Parliament, who have nobly stood forward in support of Catholic Emancipation, and the Right of the Subject to Petition for Redress of Grievances.

That our warmest Gratitude is due and hereby respectfully offered to our countrymen, the Citizens of Belfast, for the uniform and manly exertions which they have on all occasions made in support of our cause, and for the example of liberality and genuine public spirit which they have thereby shewn to the kingdom at large.

That our sincere Thanks are likewise due to the different Volunteer Corps lately reviewed in Ulster, to the Societies of United Irishmen of Dublin and Belfast, to the Protestant Freeholders of Cork, the different Gentlemen who at Grand Juries and County Meetings have supported

ported our Cause, and to all others among our Protestant Brethren, who have manifested a wish for our Emancipation; and we trust we shall evince by our conduct, that we are not insensible nor unworthy of the Kindness which they have shewn us.

That our Chairman be ordered to transmit Copies of this Day's proceedings to the Chairman of the Town-Meeting of Belfast, the Chairmen of the different Societies of United Irishmen, the different Reviewing Officers in Ulster, and the other distinguished Characters who have interested themselves in the Cause of Catholic Emancipation.

By Order of the Meeting

SIMON Mc. GUIRE,

SECRETARY.

D E C L A R A T I O N.

WE the Catholics of the City of Dublin, have read with extreme concern, the Resolutions of different bodies of our Protestant fellow-subjects, in which they express their disapprobation of the conduct of our Committee, and their aversion to our claims of the Elective Franchise, and an equal participation in the benefit of the Trial by Jury. But the Address of the Corporation of this City to the Protestants of Ireland, has filled us most peculiarly with mortification and surprise; as Irishmen we are astonished and grieved, that the first Corporation of this Kingdom should have put forth a publication, teeming with false principles of Government, and false statements of historic facts; as Catholics we lament that the same body should have misconceived and mistated our conduct and our objects.

We have read of what is called the right of conquest; it has also been called the right of robbery: but we did not imagine that a doctrine so subversive of the Peace and Settlement of Society, and of the immutable rules of Justice: that a doctrine, which in its consequences

so completely warrants, and in its language so wantonly provokes resistance, would be made the foundation of the Protestant claims to the Government of this country. We did not expect that a doctrine exploded in this island by the Revolution of 1782, would be revived to our oppression. If conquest and the right of the sword could justify the stronger in retaining dominion, why did Great-Britain abdicate her legislative supremacy over Ireland? or why were we all, Protestants and Catholics, actuated as one man to resist so legitimate an Authority? Is that monstrous and exploded principle still to be retained for our peculiar subjection, which was felt to be false by every honest man, when applied to the subjection of his native land?

We are desired in that address to “rest contented
“with the most perfect toleration of our Religion, the
“fullest security of our Property, and the most complete
“personal liberty.” They are great and important blessings, but they are not secure to any man who is a slave. They are held but by sufferance, by those who are taxed without their consent, and legislated for without being represented.

We agree with the Corporation in the spirit of one assertion. They “know of no power under Heaven
“authorized to alienate this their most valuable inheritance.” Let our claims be tried by the same principle. The Catholics were the Constituents of the very Parliament which deprived them of their Franchise, and thereby did indeed “alienate their most valuable inheritance;” and though we have acquiesced under that unjust deprivation for sixty-five years, and though we will continue to acquiesce, so long as the Statute stands in its present form, we must still declare, as a political truth, that no elected and delegated Legislature has a right to disfranchise its Electors and Delegators, who never entrusted their power to that body for the purpose of being made the instrument of its own destruction.—And we further say, that in our judgment, not even those Electors could empower their Representatives to enslave us, their posterity.

We

We are likewise told by the Corporation, that “experience has taught them, that without the ruin of the Protestant establishment, the Catholic cannot be allowed the smallest influence in the State.” The inclinations of our Body are not to subvert any establishment in this Country; if they were, we are not competent to so absurd a project; and no strength that we might derive from the Restoration of our Rights would enable us to effect it, while the King, the House of Lords, the Irish Privy Council, the English Privy Council, and the Chancellors of both Countries are unalterably Protestant.—If by Establishment be meant religious Establishment, we must further reply, that no experience has taught them so; the Protestant Religion was dominant in this Country, long before our Ancestors lost their Elective Franchise. Is it only since the year 1727, that Protestantism has been the Religion of the State in Ireland?—If by Establishment be meant the Government of the Country, it is equally ill-founded; *that* is instituted for the freedom and happiness of the governed; and yet this Address would imply, that procuring Freedom and Happiness for three-fourths of this Kingdom would cause the utter ruin of our Government. A greater libel against the Constitution of Ireland was never uttered by its most declared enemy. It is sufficiently capacious to give liberty to every man; and the more its base is widened and its blessings diffused, the more will it be fortified against the efforts of time and despotism. Nor does experience warrant the assertion. Our loss of the Right of Citizenship is comparatively modern; and the Government of this country neither required nor gained any accession of strength by our slavery. That was effected in a time of profound tranquility, after the uninterrupted loyalty and peaceable demeanour of our Ancestors had been experienced and acknowledged for thirty-six years from the capitulation of Limerick. The causes that induced this Law are now almost forgotten; but if tradition, is to be believed, where history is silent, it was enacted to satisfy Court intrigue, not public security; to change the balance

balance of power between Protestant families in two or three Counties of this Kingdom, not to give any increase of power to the Protestants at large.

It is suggested in that Address, that the Revolution was established in Ireland by force, or as it is prophanelly called by “an Appeal to Heaven.” The Revolution in England, derived all its glory and its stability from this great truth—that it was effected by the people’s will. Does the Revolution in Ireland stand on a different foundation? Is it supported by a principle directly the reverse of that which rendered the Revolution in England the admiration of the world? No! it is not so; we will not concur in calumniating that great event, that our Ancestors may also be calumniated. The Revolution in Ireland was not compleated by the Battles of the Boyne or Aughrim; but by the Articles of Limerick. It was consented to by all, Protestants and Catholics. The consent of the Catholics was obtained by a compact *as solemnly ratified, and as speedily broken*, as any in the Records of History. By that compact, the enjoyment of all their rights was stipulated for to our Ancestors, as the consideration of their consent. The restoration of those rights is therefore connected with the revolution-settlement of this Kingdom.

We are also told that these laws were enacted to “deprive the Roman Catholics of political power, in consequence of the many and great efforts made by them in support of their Popish King and French connections.” When, where or how, were those many and great efforts made? From their number and their magnitude, those who so confidently advance this assertion, cannot we presume be at a loss for an instance—but we defy the malice of invention to produce *one*. *Our forefathers never violated the Articles of Limerick*. From the time that they consented to the Revolution in 1691, they never made any efforts either in support of a Popish King, or French connections, or of any other enemy to King William and his Successors—had they even done so, the fault had been theirs—why not the punishment theirs also? Or, is it intended to be insinuated to fellow-subjects who know our loyalty, that *we* are anxious to have this Country “governed by an arbitrary and unconstitutional Popish Tyrant, and dependant upon
“ France.”

“ France,” or that *we do not desire* to “ enjoy the blessings of
 “ a free Protestant Government, a Protestant Monarch limited
 “ by the Constitution (as settled by the Revolution) and an
 “ intimate connection with the free empire of Britain?”
 If we *do*, why is the law continued after the reason of enact-
 ing it has ceased?

We admit that from the moment the Protestant began to make concessions, the Roman Catholic began to extend his claims. The first kindness of our Protestant Brethren shewed a returning spirit of liberality and affection. Before that time we were not so rash as to raise our minds to the hope of Citizenship. But we were never guilty of the deceit imputed to us, of declaring that a little would satisfy us, and when that little was granted, of claiming more. Our own attention, as well as that of our Protestant fellow-subjects, was directed to the most immediate and most practicable redress.—We did not embarrass the measure by remote and extraneous considerations, but we never did either in word or thought, *and we never will forego our hopes of Emancipation*. Freemen would not believe us, if we said that we should be induced by any, comparatively small alleviation of our grievances, to consent to perpetual slavery.

We lament that it is *not true*, “ that the last Session of Parliament left us in no wise different from our Protestant fellow-subjects, save only in the exercise of political power.” That assertion is falsified by the heavy code of Penal Laws still in force against us, many of which infringe on that security of property and that personal liberty, which it is alledged we possess. But it is not power, it is protection we solicit. It is not power, including in it the notion of *superiority*—it is the *equal enjoyment* of our Rights that we claim.

The Corporation tell us that they will not be compelled by any authority whatever, “ to abandon that political situation
 “ which their forefathers won with their swords, and which
 “ they have resolved with their lives and fortunes to maintain.”
 Are we the seditious Men that would overawe the Legislature and our Fellow-countrymen? No; our views are peaceable, and neither insult nor oppression shall make us forget our Loyalty. But wherefore this untimely threat? It wears
 the

the appearance of first urging us to despair by an eternal proscription, and then of throwing down the gauntlet of Civil War. We too have Lives and Fortunes, which we are ready to devote to the service of our Country, whenever *real danger* shall require it; but we will never degrade that last and most solemn act of patriotism into an idle menace and an insolent bravado.

The great question of our Emancipation is now afloat, we have never fought to acquire it by force, and we hope for it now only from the wisdom of the Legislature, and affection of our Protestant Brethren. But, We here solemnly and publicly declare, that we never will, through any change of time or circumstance, save the actual restoration of our Rights, desist from the peaceable and lawful pursuit of the two great objects of our hopes—**THE RIGHT OF ELECTIVE FRANCHISE, AND AN EQUAL SHARE IN THE BENEFITS OF THE TRIAL BY JURY.**

DECLARATION

(20)

THE

DECLARATION

Adopted by the General Committee March the 17th, 1792,

AND

SUBSCRIBED BY THE CATHOLICS OF IRELAND.

WHEREAS certain opinions and principles, inimical to good order and government, have been attributed to the Catholics, the existence of which we utterly deny; and, whereas, it is at this time peculiarly necessary to renounce such imputations, and to give the most full and ample satisfaction to our Protestant brethren, that
WE HOLD NO PRINCIPLE, WHATSOEVER, INCOMPATIBLE WITH OUR DUTY AS MEN OR AS SUBJECTS, OR REPUGNANT TO LIBERTY, WHETHER POLITICAL, CIVIL, OR RELIGIOUS.

Now, we, the Catholics of Ireland, for the removal of all such imputations, and in deference to the opinion of many respectable bodies of men, and individuals, among our Protestant brethren, do hereby, in the face of our Country, of all Europe, and before God, make this our deliberate and solemn Declaration.

I. WE ABJURE, DISAVOW, AND CONDEMN the Opinion, that Princes, excommunicated by the Pope and Council, or by any ecclesiastical authority whatsoever, may therefore be deposed or murdered by their subjects, or any other Persons. We hold such doctrine in detestation, as wicked and impious; and we declare we do not believe, that either the
Pope,

Pope, with or without a general Council, or *any Prelate or Priest, or any ecclesiastical power whatsoever*, can absolve the subjects of this kingdom, or any of them, from their Allegiance to his Majesty King George the Third, who is, by authority of Parliament, the lawful King of this Realm.

II. WE ABJURE, CONDEMN, AND DETEST, as unchristian and impious, the principle, that it is lawful to murder, destroy, or any ways injure any person whatsoever, for or under the pretence of their being hereticks;—and we DECLARE SOLEMNLY before God, that we believe that *no act, in itself unjust, immoral, or wicked, can ever be justified or excused by, or under pretence or colour, that it was done either for the good of the church, or in obedience to any ecclesiastical power whatsoever.*

III. We further DECLARE, that we hold it as an unchristian and impious principle, that “no Faith is to be kept with Hereticks.” This doctrine we detest and reprobate, not only as *contrary* to our religion, but as destructive of morality, of society, and even of common honesty; and it is our firm belief, that an oath made to *any* person, not of the Catholic religion, is equally binding, as if it were made to any Catholic whatsoever.

IV. We have been charged with holding as an Article of our Belief, that the Pope with or without the authority of a general Council, or that certain ecclesiastical powers, can acquit and absolve us, before God, from our Oath of Allegiance, or even from the just Oaths and Contracts entered into between man and man;

Now, WE DO UTTERLY RENOUNCE, ABJURE AND DENY that we hold or maintain any such belief, as being contrary to the peace and happiness of society, inconsistent with morality, and above all *repugnant to the true spirit of the Catholic religion.*

V. We do further DECLARE, that we do not believe that the Pope of Rome, or any other foreign Prince, Prelate, State, or Potentate, hath, or ought to have any temporal or civil Jurisdiction, Power, Superiority, or Pre-eminence, directly or indirectly, within this Realm.

VI. After

VI. After what we have renounced, it is immaterial, in a political light, what may be our Opinion or Faith in other points respecting the Pope:—However, for greater satisfaction, WE DECLARE, that it is *not* an Article of the Catholic Faith, neither are we thereby required to believe or profess “that the Pope is infallible,” or that we are bound to obey any order, in its own nature immoral, though the Pope, or any Ecclesiastical Power, should issue or direct such order; but *on the contrary*, we hold, that it would be *sinful* in us to pay any respect or obedience thereto.

VII. We further DECLARE, that we do not believe that any sin whatsoever committed by us can be forgiven at the mere will of any Pope, or of any Priest, or of any person or persons whatsoever; but, that *sincere sorrow for past sins*, a firm and sincere resolution, as far as may be in our power, to restore our neighbour's property or character, if we have trespassed on, or unjustly injured either; *a firm and sincere resolution to avoid future guilt*, and to atone to God, are *previous and indispensable* requisites to establish a well-founded expectation of forgiveness; and that any person who receives Absolution without these previous requisites, so far from obtaining thereby any remission of his sins, incurs the additional guilt of violating a Sacrament.

VIII. We do hereby SOLEMNLY DISCLAIM and for EVER RENOUNCE all INTEREST in, and TITLE to, all FORFEITED LANDS, resulting from any rights, or supposed rights, of our ancestors, or any CLAIM, TITLE, OR INTEREST therein; nor do we admit any title, as a foundation of right, which is *not established and acknowledged by the laws of the realm, as they now stand*. We desire, further, that whenever the patriotism, liberality, and justice of our countrymen, shall restore to us a participation in the elective franchise, no Catholic shall be permitted to vote at any election for members, to serve in Parliament, unless he shall previously take an oath, *to defend, to the utmost of his power, the arrangement of property in this country, as established by the different acts of Attainder and Settlement*.

IX. It

IX. It has been objected to us, that we wish to subvert the present Church establishment, for the purpose of substituting a Catholic Establishment, in its stead ; Now, we do hereby, DISCLAIM, DISAVOW, and SOLEMNLY ABJURE any such intention ; and further, if we shall be admitted into any share of the Constitution, by our being restored to the right of Elective Franchise, we are ready, in the most solemn manner, to declare, that WE WILL NOT EXERCISE that privilege TO DISTURB AND WEAKEN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PROTESTANT RELIGION, OR PROTESTANT GOVERNMENT IN THIS COUNTRY.

Signed by Order, and on Behalf of the General
Committee of the Catholics of Ireland,

EDWARD BYRNE,

CHAIRMAN.

RICHARD M'CORMICK,

SECRETARY.

THE

THE FOLLOWING IS

THE LETTER,

SAID TO BE SIGNED—"EDWARD BYRNE,"

AND

THE PLAN

ALLUDED TO BY THE CORPORATION OF DUBLIN,
THE GRAND-JURIES, &c.

At a Meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Catholics of
Ireland, EDWARD BYRNE, Esq. in the Chair,

RESOLVED—That the following LETTER be circulated.

S I R,

THIS Letter, with the Plan which accompanies it, is transmitted to You, by order of the Sub-Committee. You will perceive that the object of this Plan is to procure a fuller attendance of Country gentlemen, to assist by their advice and influence, the measures adopted by the Committee to procure for the Catholics the ELECTIVE FRANCHISE, and an equal participation in the benefits of the TRIAL BY JURY. You will please to lose no time in submitting this to the respectable Catholics of your county; You will please also to inform them, that several respectable independent country gentlemen, lately in Dublin, had frequent consultations, for the laudable purpose of re-uniting to the Committee Lord

K

Fingal,

Fingal, and the other gentlemen who had withdrawn themselves from it. These country gentlemen had the satisfaction to find, that the General Committee on one side, and the gentlemen who had entered into separate addresses on the other, mutually regretted their division; which they saw was used by the opponents of the Catholics, as a pretext for withholding from our people the Elective Franchise, and an equal participation in the benefits of the Trial by Jury. It is on all sides agreed, that if the Catholics are ALL united in this just and reasonable request, essential to the very existence of our people—there will be a certainty of success. It depends then on ourselves, whether we shall be freemen—or slaves! We say, essential to the very existence of our people; for, as the rage for electioneering interests increases, our wealthy farmers must either pay beyond the value for lands, or resign them to Protestant freeholders when out of lease; our poorer yeomanry will of course be expelled, and driven into beggary. Let us all then, speak with one voice, and supplicate the Legislature for justice—and we shall receive it.

These independent country gentlemen have received from Lord Fingal, and the gentlemen who have acted with him, the most positive declarations—that they will never again enter into any act to oppose the General Committee in their endeavours to obtain the emancipation of the Catholics; and it is determined—that all former differences in opinion shall be buried in oblivion on both sides.

The Committee had decided to send some of their body, to propose to the counties to appoint Delegates to the Committee, of whose attendance there would be a certainty; and our Chairman had actually left Dublin, with intention to go through great part of Ireland for this purpose; the independent country gentlemen, as before mentioned, took up the same idea themselves, (before they knew the Committee had determined upon it) and they and Lord Fingal and his friends, all agreed in pressing such a measure on the Committee, as an additional means of re-uniting them to the body.

Lord

Lord Fingal, his friends, and the country gentlemen before mentioned, seemed at first inclined, that the present Committee should be dissolved; an opinion, however, which further reflection on the various difficulties resulting from such a measure, the doubts entertained of the competency in the Committee to dissolve itself, and the consideration that a dissolution must necessarily occur early in 1793, induced them to forego.

The plan inclosed, sanctioned by the General Committee, by these independent gentlemen, and by Lord Fingal and his friends, is recommended to your zeal to have carried into immediate execution in your county.

Signed by Order,

RICHARD M'CORMICK,

SECRETARY.

ON THE MANNER OF CONDUCTING THE ELECTION OF DELEGATES.

IT will be of great importance, in the present state of our affairs, that the Delegates be chosen in such a manner as to make it appear evident that the nomination of such delegates is authorised by *all the People*. But as it might be imprudent to call a meeting of all the Catholics of a county, for the purpose of proceeding to such an election, it is therefore suggested—that one or two of the most respectable persons in each parish be appointed electors, at a meeting to be held at such *private house* in the parish, as may
be

be most convenient to the inhabitants. These several electors, so appointed, may meet at any central place, for the purpose of chusing from one to four (as it may appear most expedient to them) of their own residents, as Delegates to the General Committee ; no one to be eligible who shall not solemnly promise to attend his duty in Dublin, when required to do so by order of the Committee, or at least who shall not pledge himself to attend in his turn. It is also suggested that, in addition to the RESIDENT Delegates, each county do appoint at the same time, as associate Delegates for such county, one or two (as it may appear best to the electors) RESIDENT inhabitants of Dublin, whose business it shall be, to keep up a regular correspondence with their colleagues in the country, and to inform the county through them, of all proceedings in the General Committee, at such times as the county Delegates shall be absent. It is to be understood that attendance on the part of the county Delegates will not be required, except on important occasions. In this, however, they are to study their own convenience ; if they all come often, we are persuaded that the Committee will derive satisfaction and profit from their presence and advice.

As soon as the gentlemen of your county shall have appointed Delegates, it will be necessary to call THEIR attention to the first great business which shall probably engage the General Committee, viz. An humble application to our Gracious Sovereign, submitting to him our loyalty and attachment, our obedience to the laws, a true statement of our situation, and of the laws which operate against us ; and humbly beseeching—that we may be restored the ELECTIVE FRANCHISE, and an equal participation in the benefits of the TRIAL BY JURY. We have the FIRST AUTHORITY for asserting that this application will have infinite weight with our Gracious Sovereign and with Parliament, if our friends are qualified to declare, that it is the universal wish of EVERY Catholic in the Nation. To enable therefore your Delegates and the General Committee to succeed in your behalf, it will be necessary that

that the Meeting enter into Resolutions in any words they chuse, to the following effect :

*At a meeting of the Catholics of the County of
regularly convened, this Day of 1792,
in the Chair :*

*RESOLVED That of this County, and
of the City of Dublin, have been this Day chosen by the Catholics
of this County as their Delegates to the General Committee.*

RESOLVED,

*That it is our instruction to our said Delegates, to support
in said Committee, as the voice of all the Catholics of this
county, that an humble representation be made to our Gracious
Sovereign and to Parliament, of the many severe laws which
oppress his Majesty's faithful subjects, the Catholics of Ireland,
although no cause, founded in wisdom or policy, is assigned for
their continuance ; imploring it, as essential to our protection,
and to secure an impartial distribution of justice in our favour,
that we be restored to the ELECTIVE FRANCHISE,
and an equal participation in the benefits of the TRIAL BY
JURY.*

According to its present form of constitution, the General Committee is open not only to persons delegated by others, but to every Roman Catholic of landed property in the kingdom. From this mixture of REPRESENTATIVE and PERSONAL association, inconveniencies which every one may remember, but which at present it is useless to dwell on, have arisen. To guard against similar inconveniencies in future, we have recommended to your consideration the above sketch of a new system ; the object of which is to give to the Committee somewhat more of a REPRESENTATIVE, and somewhat less of an INDIVIDUAL capacity ; and we beg leave to offer to you the following observations in support of our plan ;—

Men

Men appointed by others must hold themselves accountable to those from whom they derive their trust; and therefore must regulate their conduct by the standard of general opinion; or, if they be unwilling to take such a standard for their rule, and to obey the instructions of their constituents, they may be removed from the places they hold, to make room for others more practicable, and less inclined to set the dictates of private sentiment, or private interest, in opposition to the general will, and the public good.—Under a system which is thus REPRESENTATIVE, and where the trust is revocable at pleasure, SEDUCTION cannot be practised, nor can DIVISION again take place; or at least the remedy is so near the evil, that little danger is to be apprehended from either.

Our plan, by making attendance a duty, will, we apprehend, serve to bring a greater number of Country Gentlemen into the Committee than have formerly appeared among us. While admission remains so easy as it does at present, and while so many persons are exempted from responsibility and controul, we have little reason to expect that country gentlemen will desert their homes and their immediate concerns to promote an interest which is remotely or obscurely felt; but we hope that the honourable distinction of representing others, added to the obligation of a solemn promise, will not fail to reconcile those who shall happen to be delegated, to admit of some temporary hardships, in order to promote the public good. By collecting occasionally a number of Country Gentlemen in Dublin, we flatter ourselves, that the Committee will be enabled to speak the sentiments of its constituent members with distinctness and precision; and that the country parts of the kingdom will be provided with the surest means of acquiring whatever information may be necessary on the subject of Catholic affairs. From this prompt communication of opinion and intelligence, we foresee great advantages; advantages, which under the present system are wholly beyond our reach; as the landed gentlemen are responsible only to themselves, and as the Dublin Delegates have frequently little knowledge of their constituents. The attendance of a greater number of
country,

country gentlemen will justify such a reduction of the number of Delegates for the metropolis in the General Committee, as may be judged advisable ; a measure which was always desirable, but which could not be heretofore accomplished, as the attendance of landed gentlemen was so uncertain and irregular.

Every endeavour should be used to cultivate and improve the friendship of our clergy. The clergy and laity, having but one interest, should have but one mind, and should therefore mutually combine their talents, their opinions and their exertions, in order to effectuate our common emancipation. This union of sentiment and design, this interchange of counsel, and of aid, will serve to strengthen the bonds of a common friendship, and will be the best security against innovation in matters which relate to religion.

The clergy being the natural guardians of morality, will undoubtedly consent to co-operate with the laity, when they consider that the restoration of the Elective Franchise to the Catholic community will tend to prevent those perjuries which are so common at, and which disgrace the return of electioneering contests. By such conduct will the clergy secure to themselves that influence over the laity of their own persuasion, which it is useful that good clergy should have ; and that respectability among persons of other persuasions, which must naturally result from the increased importance of the people to whom they belong. It is unnecessary to point out the advantages which a restoration of the Elective Franchise would produce in our habits and modes of life, in the state of national as well as individual happiness. Let it suffice to say, that not only laymen, but every Catholic bishop and priest, would, by the acquisition of so valuable a privilege to the Catholic body at large, find his condition meliorated in a variety of shapes and circumstances, which cannot easily be reduced within the compass of exact calculation. The silent operation of this right would, in the lapse of time, contribute to raise a respectable yeomanry in the kingdom ; and this yeomanry, giving on the one hand a new infusion of
vigour

vigour to the commonwealth, would, on the other supply a fund, from which the clergy would derive the means of a more honourable support, and more proportionate to their uncommon labours and merits, than at present they enjoy.

When this plan shall have been adopted, and the returns in consequence made, the Committee will in the course of next Winter, consider, as a measure of the last importance, what further improvements may be necessary in the mode of electing Delegates on future occasions, in order to secure a permanent, extensive, and effectual method of collecting the general sense of the Catholics of Ireland.

WE beg leave again to recommend it you most earnestly, to carry the above Plan into IMMEDIATE execution. It is of the utmost consequence, that we should have this addition of Country Gentlemen as soon as POSSIBLE, in order to give due weight and efficacy to our humble application to the Throne, which we are ADVISED to make this Summer, before the Parliamentary arrangements are formed for the ensuing Winter.

As soon as your Delegates shall have been chosen, we request that you will make a return of their names and addresses to our Secretary, *Mr. Richard M'Cormick, Mark's-Alley, Dublin,*



vigour to the commonwealth, would, on the other supply a fund, from which the clergy would derive the means of a more honourable support, and more proportionate to their uncommon labours and merits, than at present they enjoy.

When this plan shall have been adopted, and the returns in consequence made, the Committee will in the course of next Winter, consider, as a measure of the last importance, what further improvements may be necessary in the mode of electing Delegates on future occasions, in order to secure a permanent, extensive, and effectual method of collecting the general sense of the Catholics of Ireland.

WE beg leave again to recommend it you most earnestly, to carry the above Plan into IMMEDIATE execution. It is of the utmost consequence, that we should have this addition of Country Gentlemen as soon as possible, in order to give due weight and efficacy to our humble application to the Throne, which we are ADVISED to make this Summer, before the Parliamentary arrangements are formed for the ensuing Winter.

As soon as your Delegates shall have been chosen, we request that you will make a return of their names and address to our Secretary, *Mr. Richard M'Cormick, Mark's-Alley, Dublin,*



vigour to the commonwealth, would, on the other supply a fund, from which the clergy would derive the means of a more honourable support, and more proportionate to their uncommon labours and merits, than at present they enjoy.

When this plan shall have been adopted, and the returns in consequence made, the Committee will in the course of next Winter, consider, as a measure of the last importance, what further improvements may be necessary in the mode of electing Delegates on future occasions, in order to secure a permanent, extensive, and effectual method of collecting the general sense of the Catholics of Ireland.

WE beg leave again to recommend it you most earnestly, to carry the above Plan into IMMEDIATE execution. It is of the utmost consequence, that we should have this addition of Country Gentlemen as soon as POSSIBLE, in order to give due weight and efficacy to our humble application to the Throne, which we are ADVISED to make this Summer, before the Parliamentary arrangements are formed for the ensuing Winter.

As soon as your Delegates shall have been chosen, we request that you will make a return of their names and addresses to our Secretary, *Mr. Richard M'Cormick, Mark's-Alley, Dublin,*

Proceedings at the Catholic Meeting of Dublin duly convened on Wednesday,
Oct. 31, 1792, at the Exhibition-Room ExchequerStreet, ... ; Annexed is
the Declaration adopted by the General Committee March 17, 1792

Dublin 1792

Brit. 440 s

urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10281344-1